Commentary
July-August 2004

Torture: Thinking About the Unthinkable

Andrew C. McCarthy

How the Feminists Saved Marriage

Sam Schulman

In Search of "Righteous Arabs"

Robert Satloff

Latin American Crack-Up?

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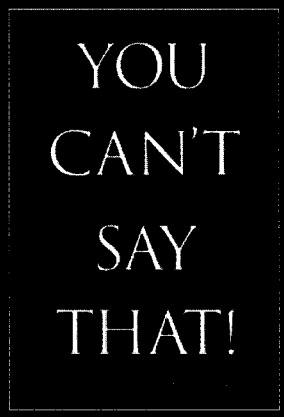

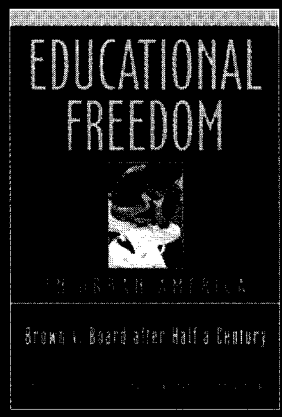

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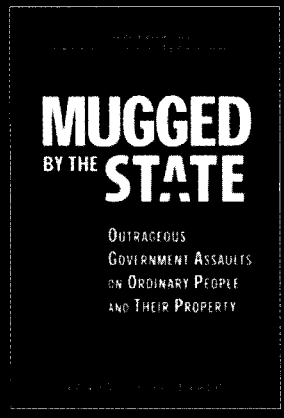

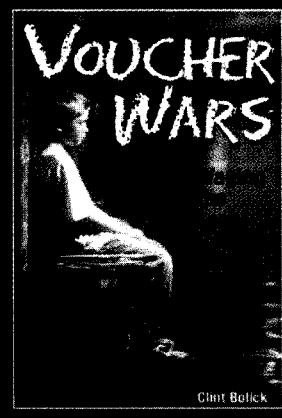

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Commentary
July-August 2004

Letters from Readers

Oil-for-Food

To the Editor:

Since Claudia Rosett's campaign to deny the United Nations any role in "bringing democracy to Iraq" may offer the best hope of saving my colleagues from further risks in that country, it is tempting to leave her unanswered ["The Oil-for-Food Scam: What Did Kofi Annan Know, and When Did He Know It?," May]. But honesty compels me to clarify at least the following points:

(1) The Oil-for-Food program is now being investigated by an independent inquiry appointed by the Secretary-General and headed by Paul Volcker, former head of the Federal Reserve.

(2) Whatever shortcomings that inquiry may reveal, the program's successes were significant. It saved at least half a million children from malnutrition; reduced the incidence of cholera, malaria, measles, mumps, meningitis, and tuberculosis; and completely eradicated polio from Iraq. It also cleared 12.2 million square meters of landmine-infested land and destroyed tens of thousands of items of unexploded ordnance.

(3) The UN employed inspectors at fixed points on Iraq's borders, not to check all traffic going in and out but to confirm that specific deliveries were made, so that payment could be authorized. They had no power to police the frontier or to stop the "smuggling" across it that had been going on since 1990.

(4) In New York, UN oil overseers reviewed the export contracts, and UN customs experts reviewed the import contracts, before passing them for approval to the sanctions committee on which all fifteen Security Council members sat.

(5) In late 2000, the oil overseers warned that the oil price fixed by Iraq's oil ministry at the beginning of each month was suspiciously low, leaving room for purchasers to pay an undeclared premium. The sanctions committee authorized the overseers to inform all buyers of Iraqi oil that payment of these surcharges would be illegal, and soon afterward the committee made Iraq switch to fixing the price retroactively, at the end of each month, when the real market value of the oil had been established.

(6) On the import side, UN experts also drew attention to suspiciously *high* prices, which could allow Saddam to extract kickbacks from suppliers. Any member of the Security Council could put any contract on hold, and the U.S. did block thousands on security grounds—citing fears that the items might have military value. Not once was a contract held up because of doubts about the price or quality of the goods.

(7) The 2.2 percent of oil revenue set aside for administrative (and operational) costs was not a "commission." No "fees" were "collected by Annan's office," as Claudia Rosett writes, or by any other part of the UN. When all of the 2.2 percent was not needed for the program, the surplus was transferred to the humanitarian account. These payments, along with much other information, were published in weekly updates on the UN's website. Nor has the UN made any secret of the fact that some $2.9 billion in interest accrued on the program's bank balances, and was used to purchase additional humanitarian supplies.

(8) As time went on, the ceiling on Iraq's oil sales was first raised and then lifted altogether, and the scope of the program expanded beyond narrowly defined humanitarian purposes. These were political decisions, taken by the Security Council. Sanctions were meant to stop Saddam from rearming, not to harm future generations of Iraqis by hold-

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ing back the country's development. It was in this context that "distribution plans" including sectors such as sports were drawn up—but that did not imply automatic approval of any given contract. Plans for a stadium did figure in one such plan, as Claudia Rosett writes, but no Oil-for-Food money was actually spent on it.

(9) Last year, after the overthrow of Saddam's regime, the Security Council told Annan to "prioritize" the remaining contracts, in consultation with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and Iraqi experts. It was during this process—with Iraqi officials now free to talk—that the full extent of the kickback system came to light. The CPA (*not* the Pentagon's Defense Contract Management Agency, whose report came much later) asked the UN to remove so-called "after-sale service fees" from a number of contracts. In most cases, the contractors agreed and reduced their prices accordingly. But, as Claudia Rosett indicates, a few refused, and one or two could not be traced. In these latter cases the goods would presumably never have reached Iraq anyway, and therefore would not have been paid for.

(10) On November 21, the CPA received the program's complete database, with all outstanding contracts and relevant documents on compact disk. It is still using that database for the receipt and payment of goods.

(11) The CPA is also still using the services of Cotecna Inspections, a company that did indeed briefly employ Kofi Annan's son in West Africa before it won the UN contract in Iraq. This fact has been public and uncontested since 1999.

EDWARD MORTIMER
Office of the Secretary-General
United Nations
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Claudia Rosett's article places full blame for alleged fraud and abuse in the Oil-for-Food program on UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his staff. She incorrectly dismisses the responsibility of members of the UN Security Council—especially its five permanent members—characterizing them as passive observers of the sanctions regime rather than the ultimate overseers of the program. She writes that contracts simply "flowed through" the Security Council.

In fact, by its own design, the Council retained exclusive authority to void or put holds on contracts under the program. She acknowledges that "the fifteen member governments were mostly on the watch for so-called dual-use items," and "only two of the five permanent, veto-wielding members appear to have done any overseeing at all." The numbers speak clearly for themselves: acting as a sanctions committee, the Council approved 36,000 contracts; the United States and United Kingdom held up over 5,000 of them on dual-use grounds, but not a single one on pricing grounds—even when alerted by the Secretariat.

The program was "amenable to manipulation" not because of the nefarious scheming of Secretariat officials but because it was a political compromise among fifteen Security Council members with very different interests and with Saddam Hussein, without whose agreement it would have been impossible to install a humanitarian program. Moreover, better alternatives were not obvious at the time, nor are they obvious in retrospect. Continuing with sanctions without a humanitarian program would have meant increasingly dire conditions for the Iraqi people and, rightly or wrongly, ever larger political costs for the U.S. These conditions might have tipped the already-strained sanctions regime toward complete collapse because of a lack of support from Russia, France, and regional powers. This would have represented a significant policy failure for the United States.

Claudia Rosett gives short shrift to the considerable positive benefits of Oil-for-Food. Average daily caloric intake increased by 83 percent over the life of the program; chronic malnutrition among children under the age of five in the central and southern parts of the country decreased by half from 1996 levels, and by 56 percent in the Kurdish region where the UN administered the program; and improved health services led to reduced child mortality rates. At the same time, proceeds from the sale of oil under the program were used to pay for the costs of the UN's weapons inspections and disarmament efforts in Iraq, as well as to provide $18 billion in compensation to the citizens of Kuwait for losses suffered during the 1990 Iraqi invasion.

Whatever the various investigations ultimately reveal about Oil-for-Food, it is a leap beyond logic to conclude from this episode, as Claudia Rosett does, that "the UN suffers from an endemic affinity with anti-Western despots, and will turn a blind eye to the devil himself in order to keep them in power." In fact, the UN Secretariat—and Secretary-General Annan in particular—is often ahead of the world's governments in condemning dictators and calling for action to halt their abuses. Annan has been extremely vocal, for example, in condemning abuses by government-backed militias in the Sudan, Robert Mugabe's harsh rule in Zimbabwe, and Slobodan Milosevic's aggression in the Balkans. The international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, with strong support from the UN Secretariat and the Secretary-General himself, is now trying Milosevic—the epitome of an "anti-Western despot"—for crimes against humanity.

Investigations into possible abuses of the Oil-for-Food program should continue vigorously as part of broader efforts to document the full measure of Saddam Hussein's crimes, and to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the UN. Annan's appointment of and cooperation with an independent investigative panel led by former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker demonstrates his commitment to both of these goals. By seriously mischaracterizing the Oil-for-Food program and the United Nations as a whole, Claudia Rosett fails to serve either.

WILLIAM H. LUERS
United Nations Association of the U.S.A.
New York City

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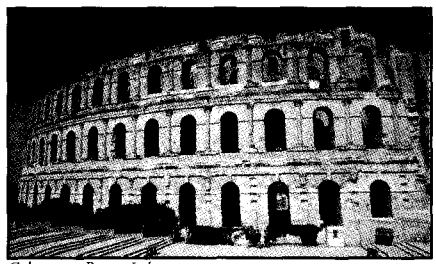

Colosseum, Rome, Italy.

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A Great Teacher

Garrett G. Fagan is associate professor of history at Pennsylvania State University. A native of Dublin, Ireland, he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Trinity College, Dublin, and was a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia.

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CLAUDIA ROSETT writes:

Defending the United Nations Oil-for-Food program is an unenviable task. Edward Mortimer, who works for the UN, and William H. Luers, whose position entails close ties with the institution, have made the best of a daunting challenge.

But that is not saying much. Both Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Luers seem more disturbed that the UN has been criticized for the most corrupt and divisive relief program it has ever run than that Saddam Hussein took advantage of this program to graft billions out of contracts for goods like baby food, medicine, rice, and wheat, all at the expense of the intended beneficiaries, the people of Iraq. Instead, both correspondents would have us believe that the real victim here has been the UN itself.

As they note, the United Nations is now in the process of being investigated—a fact they brandish as if it rendered all other critiques invalid. That inquiry may turn up some "shortcomings," Mr. Mortimer concedes, while insisting in the next breath that "the program's successes were significant." To this Mr. Luers adds that there was no real alternative to Oil-for-Food, and that in any case I am wrong to place blame on the UN Secretariat when the real culprits were (a) Saddam Hussein and (b) the Security Council.

It is true that the UN is now being investigated—no thanks to any initiative by Oil-for-Food officials or their boss, Secretary-General Kofi Annan. As I recounted in some detail in my article, Annan, in handing over the remains of the seven-year program to the U.S.-led coalition last November, was content to lavish praise on the program and its executive director, Benon Sevan, and bury the already festering issue of corruption for all time. Thereafter, confronted with damning evidence, Annan tried for months to ignore, dismiss, and deny it—though, oddly enough, Messrs. Mortimer and Luers now claim that the Secretariat was aware of big problems with Oil-for-Food all along.

Why, then, the Secretary-General's silence? According to Messrs. Mortimer and Luers, the explanation is that the Secretariat, being the humble servant of the Security Council, is perennially buffeted by the self-serving interests of assorted member states, constrained from speaking up in public even on behalf of a captive population being bilked of billions by its ruler. An interesting proposition—albeit one that fails to explain why spokesmen for the self-same Secretariat have suddenly been freed, now that the scandal has erupted into public view, to blame the whole thing on the Security Council.

In fact, as I wrote, there is plenty of blame to go around, especially among Saddam's favored business partners on the Council: Russia, China, and France. Nevertheless, as I also wrote, final responsibility lies with the Secretariat. It was the Secretariat that consolidated Oil-for-Food into one office in New York, reporting directly to Annan and coordinating nine UN agencies with more than 4,000 staff on the ground in Iraq. It was the Secretariat that was the chief interlocutor with Saddam, and it was the Secretariat that managed the bank accounts, arranged the audits, hired the relief inspectors, kept the records—*and* kept secret such telling details as the names of Saddam's business partners and the prices paid. Finally, it was the Secretariat, not the Security Council, that had the budget to administer Oil-for-Food, amounting over the life of the program to well over $1 billion, funded directly out of Saddam's oil revenues.

Did Oil-for-Food deliver some relief, as Mr. Mortimer asserts? Of course it did, and I stipulated as much. The relevant questions are how much relief, and at what cost—both in dollars and in terms of preserving the Iraqi dictator's power. This was a program in which the UN, according to Secretary-General Kofi Annan's figures, oversaw $111 billion worth of Saddam Hussein's business: $65 billion in oil sales and $46 billion in relief contracts, with the remainder paid out in compensation to victims of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Of the $46 billion approved for relief, perhaps $15 billion was actually delivered for the food and medicine that were the original aim of the program. Moreover, according to estimates by the Defense Contract Management Agency, the food shipped into Iraq under Oil-for-Food was overpriced on average by about 22 percent, a figure representing the likely graft component of the contracts.

So the real value of this core relief was almost certainly lower than the UN official figures suggest. What those figures *really* suggest is that the overpriced rations were themselves a sideshow, the main events being the global network of bribery, kickbacks, and clout enjoyed by Saddam and the vast expansion of Annan's domain.

MR. MORTIMER amplifies his criticism of my article by means of a long list of quibbles over footnotes, intended, no doubt, to discredit the substance of my thesis. His list begins with the intriguing information that UN inspectors of relief supplies, posted at UN-authorized entry points into Iraq, "had no power to police the frontier" but were there only to check whether specific deliveries conformed to the criteria for releasing payment out of Saddam's oil revenues.

Mr. Mortimer seems quite unaware of the devastating implications of this bland statement. By his own admission, it seems, a program—UN sanctions—established to control Iraq's trade had devolved under Oil-for-Food into a UN-administered setup under which a convoy of trucks carrying anything whatsoever could have rolled right past UN inspectors in broad daylight, and those inspectors would have been required to do nothing but tell the drivers whether or not to send their paperwork elsewhere. To make matters even more poignant, there were not any UN weapons inspectors on hand to intervene during the heyday of Oil-for-Food, Saddam having kicked them out in late 1998—coincidentally, right around the time the UN began expanding the size and scope of the program.

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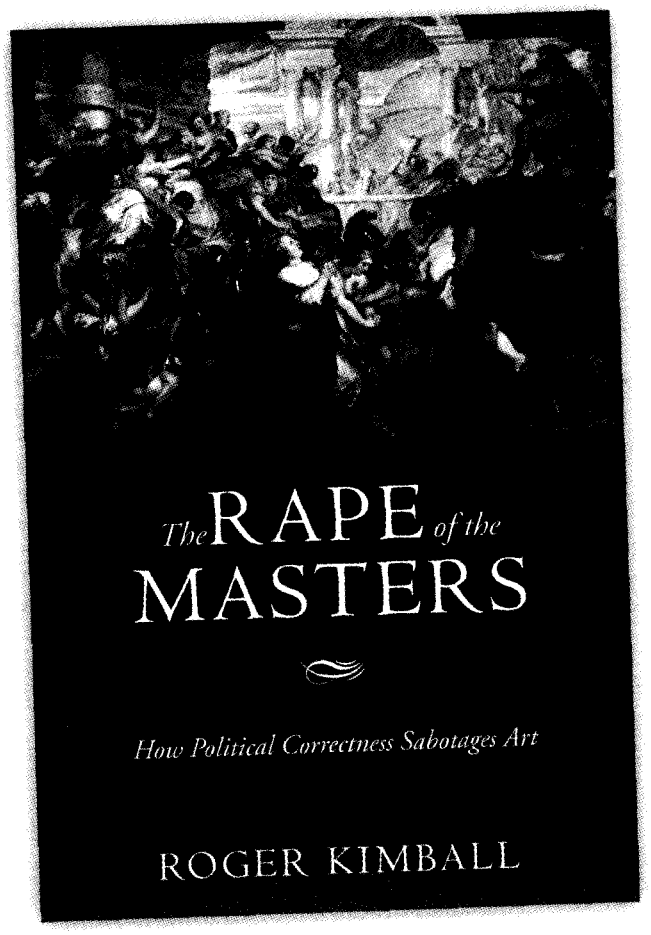

Colleges and universities used to teach art history to encourage connoisseurship and acquaint students with the riches of our artistic heritage. But, as Roger Kimball shows in this witty and provocative book, today's students are less likely to learn about the aesthetics of master works than be told, for instance, that Peter Paul Rubens's great painting "Drunken Silenus" is an allegory about rape; or that Jan van Eyck's masterful Arnolfini Portrait is about "middle-class deceptions... and the treatment of women;" or that Winslow Homer's "The Gulf Stream" is "a visual encoding of racism."

In *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art*, Kimball, a noted art critic himself, shows how academic art history is increasingly held hostage to radical cultural politics—feminism, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, the whole armory of academic anti-humanism. To make his point, Kimball shows how eight famous works of art—all of them reproduced in the book—have been interpreted by contemporary art historians to fit a radical ideological fantasy. Then, in his own exemplary analysis of these great works in which aesthetics, not politics, guides the discussion, Kimball shows how each of these paintings should properly be understood.

The Rape of the Masters exposes the charlatanry that fuels much academic art history and oozes into the art world generally. It also provides an engaging antidote to the tendentious, politically motivated assaults on our treasured sources of culture and civilization that take place in today's universities, museums, and art galleries.

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Meanwhile, Mr. Mortimer assures us, UN experts in New York were warning the Security Council about Saddam's kickback schemes as early as 2000. Although any Council member could have put any contract on hold, "and the U.S. did block thousands on security grounds," it turns out that "not once was a contract held up because of doubts about the price or quality of the goods." What readers need to know, and what Mr. Mortimer neglects to say, is that, almost monthly during this same period, either Kofi Annan or Benon Sevan was going public to express the UN's "serious concern" or "continuing concern"—not, however, over the fact that Saddam was deep into graft but that the U.S. was holding up his precious Oil-for-Food deals.

Mr. Mortimer argues that the 2.2 percent of Saddam's oil revenue "set aside" for administrative costs "was not a 'commission'" and that no "fees" were collected by the UN. How, then, should we describe the 2.2 percent (or 3 percent if we include an additional .8 percent to cover weapons inspections, even though there were no such inspections, for half the life of the program)? It walked like a commission, it quacked like a commission, and in the world of business a percentage cut for services rendered is called a commission.

To those laboring in the vineyards of humanitarian relief, this may sound crude. But when the UN Secretariat tapped straight into Saddam's oil wells and took in $1.9 billion, it crossed over into the realm of commerce, rendering its services less to the Iraqi people than to the tyrant who ruled over them. That is how the incentives were set up, and that is pretty much how things went. By the final years of the program, the UN was waving its supposedly limited and temporary relief operation as a seal of good housekeeping for Saddam's Oil-for-Palaces, Oil-for-Weapons, and quite possibly Oil-for-Terror—plus, lest I forget, Oil-for-Overpriced Food.

Mr. Mortimer does not like my reference to the use of Oil-for-Food to cover such things as UN approval of Saddam's plans to build an Olympic stadium. The sanctions, he protests, were never meant to hold back Iraq's development, and in any case no money was ever spent on the stadium. That is true, but only because, less than three months after Annan signed off on the plan, and very much against Annan's express wishes, the U.S.-led coalition toppled Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Mortimer is trivially right that it was the Coalition Provisional Authority and not the U.S. Defense Contract Management Agency that pushed the UN last summer to clean house. He is wrong, however, to suggest that only "a few" of the contractors asked to renegotiate their deals refused to do so, and that "one or two could not be traced." According to the UN's own public records, out of more than 5,000 outstanding contracts, more than 1,250 were scrapped, most with no specific reason given. In one batch of 728 dumped contracts, notations indicate at least 126 cases (somewhat more than "one or two," by my count) in which contractors not only refused to negotiate but either did not respond at all or could not be found. In my article I mentioned one such UN notation concerning a Jordanian supplier of school furniture: "Company does not exist and the person in charge moved to Egypt."

Did the Coalition Provisional Authority, on November 21, 2003, "receive the program's complete database with all outstanding contracts and relevant documents on compact disk," as Mr. Mortimer contends? If so, it was not from the UN. The UN's Treasury Department confirmed to me in mid-March that no bank records had been turned over to anyone since the fall of Saddam. As for Annan's son Kojo, I did not simply confirm his employment with Cotecna Inspections, I also confirmed the dates of his employment. His consultancy—wherever it was—coincided with the period in which Cotecna would have been assembling and submitting its competitive bid for the UN job of checking goods coming into Iraq. According to the UN, Kojo quit the consultancy in early December 1998. On the 31st of that month, Cotecna beat out several rivals for the job.

Finally, let me revert to Mr. Luers, who, first excusing the manipulations of Oil-for-Food, ends by conceding that transparency is of course a worthy goal for the UN. If this amounts to more than the sort of thing one can be expected to say after all one's strenuous efforts at opacity have failed, then the sentiment can only be applauded. Like many others around the world, I can hardly wait to behold the next act of the drama.

Surveillance

TO THE EDITOR:

Those who would rely on criminal prosecutions to counter terrorism, and who would preserve the wall between law enforcement and intelligence, should heed Andrew C. McCarthy's counsel ["The Intelligence Mess: How It Happened, What to Do About It," April]. He is one of a handful of prosecutors who have actually investigated and tried the relevant cases, and his pointed explanation of the inadequacies of the criminal-justice system should carry far more weight than blithe protestations—based on the mere fact of conviction—that such trials have "worked." I join Mr. McCarthy in condemning barriers to information-sharing between law enforcement and intelligence, and I too applaud the provisions of the USA Patriot Act that reduce those obstacles.

Where I diverge from Mr. McCarthy is in my greater wariness of executive power in the area of *domestic* intelligence. Because intelligence agencies lack the means to show a steady stream of successes to Congress and the public, they are likely to be particularly dependent on the favor of the White House and prone to follow presidential priorities. In the international arena, this tendency is tolerable, even preferable. But at home, the risks may be too great that an administration (or rogues within it) will use an intelligence agency for inappropriate partisan or personal purposes. The problem was highlighted by Watergate, but it goes back to FDR and even before.

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Jews praying in a synagogue.

A Great Teacher

David B. Ruderman is Joseph Meyerhoff Professor of Modern Jewish History and Director of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, he taught at Yale University and the University of Maryland, where he was instrumental in establishing both institutions' Judaic Studies programs. Professor Ruderman is president of the American Academy for Jewish Research, and has a lifetime achievement award from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

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The oversight mechanisms introduced by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in the 1970's thus addressed a serious structural problem. But perhaps we do not have to rely so heavily on the FISA process to address this problem, and should look instead to other checks on executive power. Local police forces offer one such check. Integrating these forces into the intelligence system is an absolute necessity, since without the numbers, local knowledge, and relationships with community members that police forces provide, we will not even know which "dots" need to be connected. This kind of integration would supply a degree of political accountability that the federal intelligence community has never been able to provide.

I am also charier than Mr. McCarthy about allowing the CIA to operate domestically. Because threats at home so frequently have foreign connections, the CIA could develop into the lead domestic intelligence agency, at the expense of the FBI. Although the Bureau has not always worked well with local police, over the last two decades it has made huge strides in this direction, and remains the federal agency best suited to reaching out to local law enforcers. Any move tending to diminish the role of the FBI in terrorism prevention at home ought to be resisted.

DANIEL RICHMAN
Fordham Law School
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Andrew C. McCarthy nails the central issue when he identifies "contemporary political morality," shaped by Vietnam and Watergate, as the source of the intelligence mess in which we now find ourselves. Since the late 1960's, Mr. McCarthy observes, we have seen a steady chipping away at executive power and a commensurate increase in congressional and judicial fiddling in intelligence.

But contemporary political morality has eroded national security in other ways as well. Perhaps most seriously, it has debased the rationale for intelligence by nurturing the treacherous notion that the problem is "us," not "them," and it has reinforced the New Left's principal article of faith: that America has enemies because it has created them. Even today—after the attacks on our African embassies, the Khobar Towers, the *USS Cole*, and the World Trade Center—political correctness keeps us from fighting the real enemy. We are so fearful of being deemed "judgmental" about religion that we declare war against terrorism—a *means* of warfare—rather than against radical Islamism, the force that has brought death to our streets.

Mr. McCarthy also neatly parses the consequences of treating terrorists as criminals rather than as combatants. He hammers home the deleterious consequences of FISA and the guidelines that prevented law enforcement from cooperating with intelligence officers. Although Mr. McCarthy is probably right that FISA is here to stay, I believe we should press to do away with it. Even if we fail, the debate could bring into bold relief the ways in which FISA interferes with counterterrorist operations, and could strengthen support for the Patriot Act. We should not let critics of the administration have it both ways: they attack George W. Bush for lacking a sense of urgency in going after terrorists and at the same time they try to gut the Patriot Act.

ROBERT ANDREWS
Hudson Institute
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Andrew C. McCarthy's lucid and compelling article should be required reading for every member of Congress and for every federal judge, not to mention members of the executive branch.

JEROME ACKERMAN
Chevy Chase, Maryland

ANDREW C. MCCARTHY writes:

I am humbled by these generous remarks. A few comments, though, are warranted.

On the subject of intelligence gathering, I am optimistic that a consensus is growing on the subject of FISA. Even Daniel Richman, who perceives a need for harnessing the executive power to conduct national-security investigations, appears convinced from a quarter-century's experience that the FISA cure is worse than (what he sees as) the structural disease; he would thus opt for other, less intrusive checks on executive power.

Robert Andrews goes even further, positing that FISA has proved dangerous to our national security and that we should press to eliminate it. Mr. Andrews's position (on this and other particulars) is closer to my own. Where we have a tactical difference is on the matter of practical politics.

Thus, Mr. Andrews believes it is worth trying to repeal FISA, and that even an unsuccessful effort in that direction would have the residual benefit of underscoring the urgent need for the Patriot Act (whose reforms will sunset if not extended). Although I agree that, in a perfect world, FISA should be scrapped, the outsized hubbub over the Abu Ghraib prison abuses suggests to me that this is not a propitious time to be arguing for less restraint on executive power. In today's scandal-driven environment, moreover, I fear that pushing for outright elimination would not only be nearly certain to fail but could actually work *against* Mr. Andrews's aim of promoting support for the Patriot Act.

That does not, however, mean abandoning hope for reform, and it is here that I disagree with Mr. Richman. While it is true that there have been historic abuses of presidential power, it does not follow that these are indicative of a "serious structural problem." No structure, no matter how exacting, is capable of eliminating the possibility of abusive action. Meanwhile, overregulation has the perverse effect of hamstringing not the dishonorable actor but only the honorable one, to the great detriment of national security. The corrupt are corrupt precisely because, in order to accomplish their objectives, they will violate whatever rules exist.

History, moreover, is more dynamic than Mr. Richman allows. In the future, congressional over-

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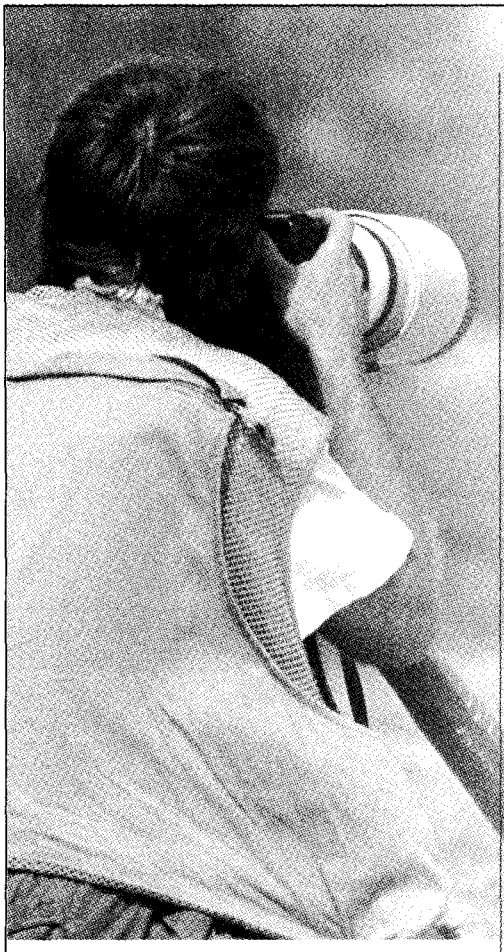

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sight can benefit from the mistakes and excesses of the past. Congress today is far better positioned than, say, the Nixon-era Congress to detect and discourage the types of abuses that marked pre-FISA exercises of national-defense power. Consequently, a system longer on oversight and much shorter on paralyzing schemes like FISA would better promote national security while adequately protecting civil liberties.

Finally, I fully agree with Mr. Richman on the need to integrate local law enforcement into the intelligence mix. Given that there are only about 11,000 FBI agents nationwide, the multiplier effect to be gained from hundreds of thousands of state and local police officers is critical to the development of a comprehensive intelligence mosaic. Permitting the CIA to operate domestically, far from detracting from the FBI's domestic mission, could be another such multiplier. The salient point is to get all of our machinery working together—enlivened by a healthy competitive spirit but unburdened by institutional barriers and emphatically not at cross-purposes.

Head Cases

TO THE EDITOR:

Joseph Epstein seems to have no conception of what neurologists today actually do ["Writing on the Brain," April]. He mentions, for instance, electroshock as a therapy for bipolar disorder, but such treatment is beyond the ken of any neurologist I have met during more than 30 years of practice in the specialty.

Mr. Epstein makes a particularly disturbing and insulting attack when he asserts that neurologists can make diagnoses but "only occasionally make things right." This is blatantly false. Common neurological diseases like migraine, epilepsy, and Parkinson's are treatable, and most patients with formerly dreaded diseases like Guillain-Barré syndrome, myasthenia gravis, and chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy now lead normal, productive lives and enjoy normal life spans.

Although Mr. Epstein criticizes Alice Flaherty's use of qualifying words like "may," "seem," "could," and "appears" in her recent book, *The Midnight Disease*, those words are appropriate when the subject is biology or medicine. In these disciplines, to be certain is to be foolish. A creative writer, on the other hand, has the license to be certain since his contentions can never be subjected to the rigors of the scientific method. As Voltaire put it, "doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is an absurd one."

JACK N. ALPERT, M.D.
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

It grieves me that the usually brilliant Joseph Epstein reinforces the self-deprecating and clichéd notion that in order to be a writer "one must cultivate incompetence at almost every other form of profitable work." True, a few writers have been helpless boobs. But many more have lived successful, if not necessarily satisfying, lives: Wallace Stevens was an insurance-company manager, T.S. Eliot a banker, Kafka a claims accountant. Mencken and Hemingway were journalists, Borges was a librarian, Thoreau a surveyor, Twain a riverboat pilot and printer, Emerson a preacher. If nothing else, writers are usually competent to teach English or edit a journal. Mr. Epstein himself was a top-notch editor and teacher. He should give himself some credit.

CHRISTOPHER ORLET
Columbia, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Suffering as I do from that incurable disease characterized by incompetence, contempt, and lunacy, I am compelled to say how much I enjoyed Joseph Epstein's piece. But he leaves out the ultimate symptom of being a writer: envy of one's peers. His article is a perfect example of how to arouse it.

JOE HARKINS
Jersey City, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

A thousand bravos to Joseph Epstein for his essay, "Writing on the Brain." When I tell people that I write because I love to see my name in print, they look at me as if I were a monster. Maybe so, but I am an honest monster, and it sounds as if I am in very good company.

LAURA KENNELLY
Berea, Ohio

JOSEPH EPSTEIN writes:

Dr. Jack N. Alpert, writing in defense of his own medical specialty, reminds me of nothing so much as the Jesuit who, accused of killing seven men and a dog, produces the dog.

In my article I cited a friend who was told that, as a cure for bipolar illness, shock therapy was as iffy a proposition as restarting one's computer to cure one's software problems—sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. My friend now informs me that it was not a neurologist who administered his ECT but a psychiatrist. I regret having gotten this wrong. But surely the larger point is this: since we know so little about the mind, medical science often has to fall back on just such crude analogies when confronting serious mental problems.

If Dr. Alpert will reread my essay, he will discover that I know perfectly well that neurology can be an aid in lessening the torments of muscular sclerosis and other grave illnesses. "Neurology," I wrote, "is at its best when it describes how the body works in connection with the nervous system, as in the treatment of Parkinson's disease and epilepsy." But, knowledge of the brain being as rudimentary as it is, neurology's role is usually greater in alleviation than in actual cure. No small thing, the alleviation of pain and suffering; but cure awaits greater knowledge, which, as of now, we do not have.

In any case, as Dr. Alpert must be aware, my real quarrel is not with the uses of neurology to lessen suffering but with its pretensions to understanding human consciousness and artistic creation—the subject of Alice Flaherty's book. In my article I claimed those powers of understanding were just about nil. Nothing in Dr. Alpert's letter convinces me otherwise.

Dr. Alpert does not say whether he has actually read Flaherty's book. In

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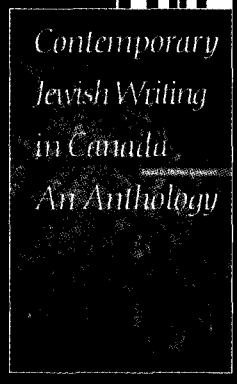

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commenting on her continual use of qualifiers when introducing scientific material, I said that she did so because she was "an honest person." I would not have had her do otherwise. But I would add that if she were asked to remove every sentence containing such qualifiers, there would remain enough material of purely scientific interest to compose, with a bit of padding, a sonnet.

I wonder if Christopher Orlet knows the old Russian proverb to the effect that a poet always cheats his boss. I take the point of this proverb to be that a true writer, under the lash of necessity, can struggle along at a job to make a living, but his heart and his mind will always be elsewhere. My advice to Mr. Orlet, or to anyone else whose dentist tells him that he is writing a novel, is to get the hell out of that dental chair as quickly as possible.

Finally, I thank Joe Harkins and Laura Kennelly for their kind words.

Soviet Sources

TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to Mark Falcoff, General Dmitri A. Volkogonov, who once declared that he found no evidence in the KGB archives that Alger Hiss had been a Soviet agent, was never "a high-ranking Soviet intelligence officer" [Books in Review, April]. Volkogonov spent his whole career indoctrinating cadets with Communist ideology, rising to become head of propaganda for the Soviet army. During the glasnost period, he was granted almost exclusive access to the KGB and Central Committee archives—an experience that, he claimed, overturned his belief in Communism. His research produced several revisionist biographies of Soviet leaders, including Stalin and Trotsky. But even if Volkogonov's conversion to the truth late in life was sincere, his testimony about Hiss (as Mr. Falcoff notes) cannot be trusted.

ALEXANDER MASSEY
London, England

A Happy Life

TO THE EDITOR:

As a subscriber to COMMENTARY, I was surprised and delighted by Terry Teachout's sympathetic appraisal of my late husband, the violinist Louis Kaufman, and I deeply appreciated Mr. Teachout's engrossing review of his memoir, *A Fiddler's Tale* ["Fiddlers Three," April]. Mr. Teachout expresses his ideas with Mozartean grace.

Louis had a happy attitude in the 62 years we shared. He truly enjoyed fine achievement in music, art, books, and theater, and I learned from him to express thanks, for one often regrets not having done so.

ANNETTE KAUFMAN
New York City

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Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)," in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians"and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millennium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements." When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews)—the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees." In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees—by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million (!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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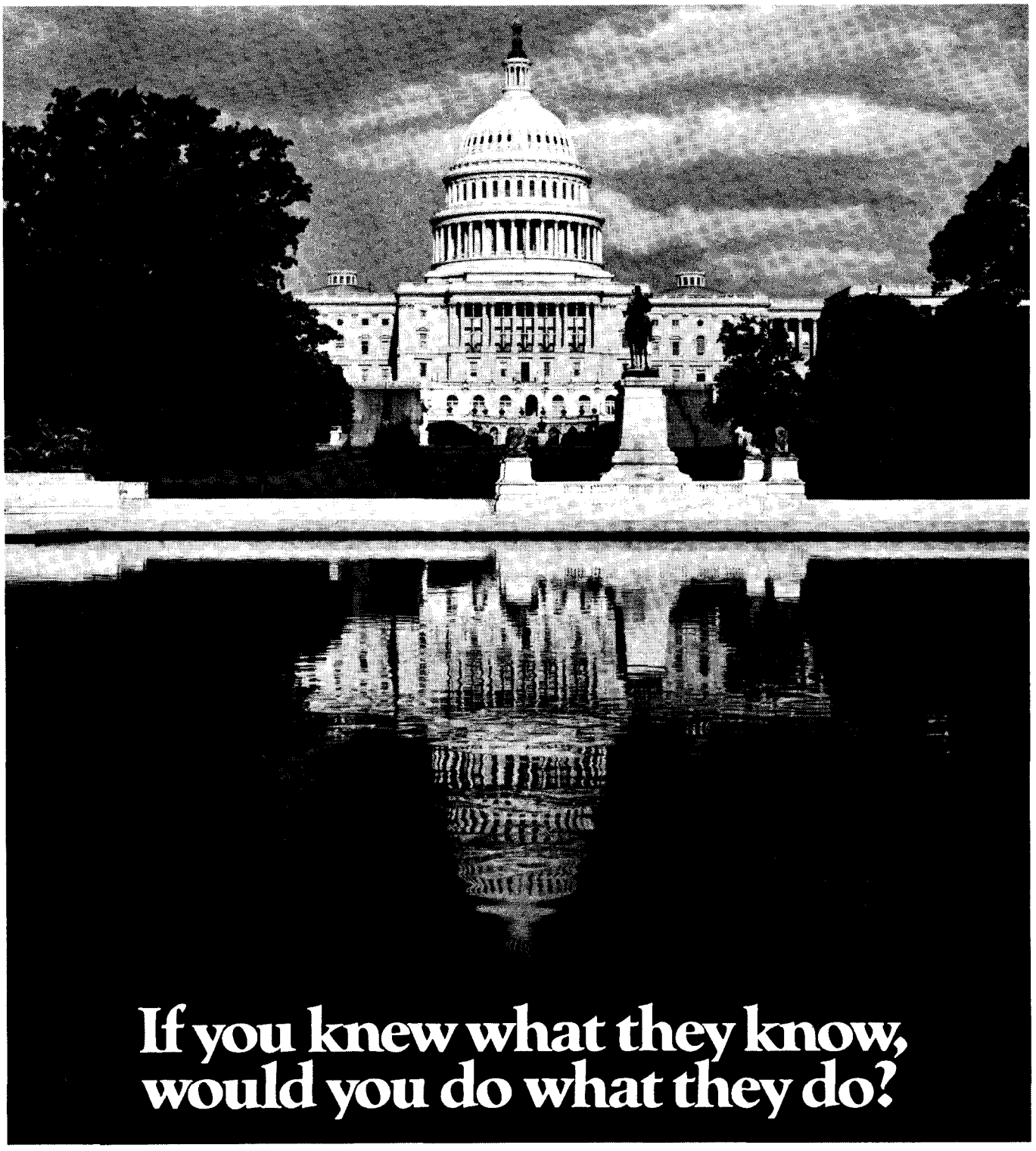

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Commentary
July-August 2004

Torture: Thinking About the Unthinkable

Andrew C. McCarthy

THE MORTIFICATION of Iraqi prisoners by American military personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad has been discomfiting far beyond the impact of the now-infamous images. Coupled with other reports about harsh post-9/11 tactics to garner information from captured terrorists, and with ongoing investigations into deaths alleged to have occurred in connection with interrogations, Abu Ghraib and the reaction to it have forced front and center a profound national evasion: the propriety of torture.

As one would expect, the scandal has produced no small amount of righteous indignation. The civil-libertarian lobby, operating in overdrive, has issued ringing declarations that torture is unacceptable under any circumstances; accused the Bush administration of giving a green light to the humiliation of captives; and demanded the jettisoning of established international norms in favor of protocols codifying new rights for mass murderers. The financier George Soros, who has thrown millions of his billions behind various left-wing causes, recently proclaimed that Abu Ghraib was the functional equivalent of the 9/11 attack, only committed this time by the United States.

On the other side, deep disapproval of the abuse has been joined to brave talk about how we must make allowances for a "new kind of war," and to reminders that Abu Ghraib under American malefactors was a day at the beach compared with Abu Ghraib under Saddam and his ghouls and that our terrorist enemies, instead of stripping their captives naked and leashing them like dogs, tend to behead them instead. This is all true, as far as it goes, but it has been largely unaccompanied by any examination of the key question—namely, what are, and what are not, appropriate methods of interrogation? Appropriate, that is, according to American values and not the values of humanity's basest elements.

Finally, there are the centrists, who well understand that our enemies are covert operatives bent on killing us in sneak attacks, and that the only way to foil them is to get information about who they are and when and where they will strike next. Unfortunately, zealots inspired by Islamic militancy and willing to immolate themselves in suicide assaults are not likely to share their secrets under the comparatively mild duress of humane captivity. Thus, the centrists figure, there is probably some necessary torture afoot—which they think wrong, or at the very least unsavory, but from which they would prefer to avert their gaze.

This is all, as I say, to be expected. If the spectacle of ruthless mass murder à la 9/11 evokes blind vengefulness in some, in others it triggers deep-seated habits of denial or self-blame. In the meantime, the mere mention of torture is enough to en-

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gender disquieting thoughts of the dark brutality of which men (and women!) have historically shown themselves capable. Under the circumstances, rationality is not a good bet to rule the day. Nevertheless, it is where any discussion of the terrorist threat and how to deal with it must begin and end.

Terrorism in general is not a new phenomenon, but today's global and systematic menace is plainly not the threat that was contemplated when international humanitarian law, in the form of the Hague Convention, the Geneva Conventions, and the United Nations Convention Against Torture, took root. Those agreements were designed to institutionalize the laws of war, to promote the humane treatment of captured combatants, and to reduce civilian casualties in times of armed conflict. They were written for wars among readily identified forces—nation-states and, to some extent, intra-state liberation movements and organized insurgencies—in which conflict-appropriate tactics were well established and victory (or defeat) was easily visualized. They did not anticipate militant Islam: a sub-national force of international scope, with access to weapons of unfathomed destructive power. They did not contemplate a core methodology—targeting civilians, randomly torturing and killing prisoners—that grossly and willfully violates the very premises of humanitarian law. They did not take account of a situation in which our highest priority would be to obtain not territory or treasure but *intelligence*, and in which victory would be exceedingly difficult to define.

Does this mean that the time has come to upend the entire structure of the law of armed conflict? Hardly. The impulse for making law is driven by a firm grasp of what kinds of conduct are condemnable. The fact that militant Islam has organized itself precisely within the parameters of the *universally* condemnable—that the terrorists, to adapt Daniel P. Moynihan's famous phrase, have defined deviancy right down to the bottom—is not a reason to reshape norms in order to license execrable behavior. Rather, it compels us to weigh the overriding imperative of our national security, without which our own civil liberties would be nonexistent, against the sanctity and dignity of human life, even when that life belongs to a captured terrorist. In the end, it compels us to ask rationally whether torture is ever permissible.

BEFORE COMING to that central issue, it would be helpful to clear away some underbrush surrounding the question of who may lawfully be held for questioning. This is necessary because humanitarian-law activists, many of whom seem more preoccupied with the treatment of terrorists than with the carnage wrought *by* terrorists, have been working feverishly to convince us that the government's denial of prisoner-of-war (POW) status to al Qaeda terrorists captured in Afghanistan and held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, somehow caused the abuse of actual POW's in Iraq.

As it happens, however, whether one is or is not a POW is a matter not of a moment's intuition but of long-settled principle—of, one might even say, merit. "POW" is an honorable legal status. In order to earn that status, and its protections, one is expected to conduct oneself honorably. Granting it to combatants who do not do so would only offer a further incentive to belligerents to act dishonorably. Granting it to terrorists, in particular, would gravely endanger the lives of countless civilians—which, in the greater scheme of things, would lead to far worse evil than the deplorable treatment of a relative handful of prisoners.

It may well be that the failure adequately to regulate and monitor interrogation practices led to a culture that made Abu Ghraib more likely. That, however, has little to do with the legal *status* of those being interrogated. And it is incongruous, to say the least, to assail the Bush administration for the alleged consequence of a perfectly appropriate decision concerning the status of terrorists while ignoring the foreseeable (in truth, inevitable) consequence of abolishing the very distinctions on which that status rests. The whole rationale for having POW rules in the first place is to encourage civilized warfare and to protect civilians.

Where, then, do those distinctions come from? The relevant principles, developed over centuries, have been passed down to us primarily as codified in the Hague Convention IV of October 18, 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, particularly the Third, which addresses the "Treatment of Prisoners of War." It is crucial to remember that these are laws of war, and that the primary object in wartime is forcibly to defeat the enemy. In that sense, they constitute a practical effort to limit abuse and suffering while remaining ever cognizant of the martial context, which is to say of each side's drive to win. Moreover, these laws do not purport to prevent all discomfort to captives or all collateral damage to civilians and non-combatants. Rather, they seek to establish normative guidelines in which legitimate military objectives are pursued without causing disproportionate harm, fully understanding that harm is, to some extent, unavoidable.

The Hague Convention conveys the honorable

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notion of "lawful" or "privileged" combatant. During wartime, combatants are privileged to employ military force if they are members of a national army or of a militia that is part of such an army and that conducts itself accordingly, meaning that its members are subject to a formal chain of command; wear uniforms (i.e., "have a fixed distinctive emblem recognizable at a distance"); carry their weapons openly; and conduct their operations in accordance with "the laws and customs of war."

And what are those laws and customs? By the early 20th century, they comprised a well-founded balance of military necessity with humanitarian considerations based on the principles of "proportionality" and "distinction." The first called for factoring the likely damage to civilian infrastructure into the calculus for identifying proper military objectives; the second, for limiting acceptable targets to those objectives. The legal scholars David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey have usefully summarized the resultant set of rules, which were long ago accepted "by all civilized states":

> (1) only sovereign states have the right to make war; (2) civilians cannot be deliberately attacked; (3) combatants can be attacked either en masse or individually; (4) quarter is to be granted when sought; (5) lawful combatants, when taken prisoner or otherwise incapacitated by wounds, are to be accorded the respect and privileges due prisoners of war (POW's); and (6) while all forms of force can be deployed in combat, certain weapons designed to cause unnecessary suffering are proscribed.[1]

Two other laws are likewise important for our purposes here, and are logically antecedent to rule (5) above: captured combatants may be held until the conclusion of hostilities, and they may be interrogated. Lately there has been much caterwauling over these points, particularly as they relate to captured members of al Qaeda. Leaving aside for the moment whether such persons may be classified as lawful combatants, their detention is routinely decried as unacceptable because it is "indefinite"—as if there has ever been a war in which captives could be assured that hostilities would end on a date certain.

In fact, the theory behind these laws is simple and irrefutable. Captives may be held "indefinitely" because if they are released they are likely to rejoin the battle, thus prolonging the war and its attendant suffering. By contrast, imposing a maximum and arbitrarily chosen period of detention (say, three years) would defeat the logical purpose of the detention. Similarly, captives may be questioned because they are likely to have information which, if learned by the captor state, will protect its forces, make it easier to pinpoint legitimate military targets of strategic importance, and secure victory more promptly—all of which saves lives.

THE GENEVA Conventions, promulgated in the middle of the last century, offered additional humanitarian protections. What impelled their drafting were the widespread atrocities visited upon captured prisoners of war during World War I and the savagery of World War II, in which civilians were broadly targeted, exterminated, and subjected to sundry lesser horrors. These 1949 accords are generally applicable only between and among national powers that have entered into them.

The Third Geneva Convention affords specific protections to prisoners of war: that is, lawful or privileged combatants who have been captured while taking part in hostilities. POW status is generally limited to two categories: members of the armed forces of nations that are parties to the conflict, and members of militias and organized resistance movements that belong to a nation that is a party to the conflict, provided they fulfill the conditions mentioned above (being part of a formal chain of command, wearing uniforms, etc.).

Those who satisfy these criteria are entitled "in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honor." POW's, moreover, "must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity." Similarly prohibited are "measures of reprisal against" them. The detaining power, in addition, is required to provide all POW's with health care and maintenance and to show no preference based "on race, nationality, religious belief, or political opinions, or any other distinction founded on similar criteria." Furthermore, while POW's may be questioned broadly, they are obligated to reveal—in the time-honored formulation—only their name, rank, and serial number. Finally, "prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind."

Militant Islamic terrorists like those belonging to al Qaeda manifestly do not qualify for POW status because they are not lawful combatants: they are not part of a nation state, they are not signatories of the Geneva Conventions, they do not wear uniforms, they do not as a rule carry their weapons openly, they hide among (and thus gravely imperil) civilian population and infrastructure, and they intentionally

[1] "Unleashing the Dogs of War," the *National Interest*, Fall 2003.

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target civilians for indiscriminate mass homicide in order to extort concessions from governments they oppose. As a result, they do not enjoy the special privileges of POW's, such as entitlements during interrogation to limit their answers to "pedigree" information and to refuse to answer other questions.

But there is a complication. It is true that the 1949 protocols do not apply to al Qaeda. Nevertheless, even those who rightly maintain that the general protections of the Conventions are unavailing to terrorist organizations have found in them a high-minded proscription against torture that extends to everyone, including terrorists. As best I can tell, this interpretation is rooted in a pertinent passage of Article 3 (common to all four Conventions):

> Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms and *those placed hors de combat by . . . detention* . . . shall in all circumstances be treated humanely[,] [and not subjected to] violence to life and person, in particular, murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture[,] [nor to] outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment. [Emphasis added.]

This provision, it should be noted, does not literally compel the construction that has sometimes been placed on it. Indeed, it seems plausible that the phrase, "those placed hors de combat by . . . detention," was intended only to modify "members of the armed forces"—i.e., lawful combatants belonging to the signatories' armies, some of whom may have been rendered hors de combat by detention. The fact that the provision is widely interpreted as extending anti-torture protection to nonsignatories almost certainly owes more to the general disrepute in which murder and torture are held by the civilized world than to any putative desire of the framers to create an entirely new category, otherwise left virtually unmentioned in the four Conventions.

But the bottom line is that, arguably, captured terrorists may not be lawfully subjected to torture. Is that the end of the matter?

TO ANSWER that question requires a look at more law: specifically, a convention developed more than a quarter-century after the 1949 Geneva Conventions took effect. This was a protocol to the Conventions, known as Protocol I Additional, dated June 8, 1977 and relating to the "Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts."

The late 70's, one should recall, was the heyday of home-grown insurgencies and "national liberation" movements. These groups, in collusion with Western human-rights activists, pushed to extend Geneva protections to members of nonstate militias—often, guerrillas engaged in fighting colonial powers or other regimes backed by the West (especially the United States). Protocol I, as Rivkin and Casey have observed, was the fruit of that effort.

Not only does the accord grant POW status to such guerrillas, but it actually gives them a number of significant advantages over traditional nation-state armies. It allows them to maintain their privileged combatant status even if they have concealed their arms until very shortly before attacking, and it makes it unlawful to use force against them unless they are in the act of preparing an attack or attacking—thus permitting them to dictate the time and place of battle. Protocol I tips the scales even further by its rule of nonreciprocity, under which combatants in nonstate militias do not forfeit their privileged status even if they routinely violate international humanitarian law, which they are of course far more likely to do than are national armies.

It will come as no surprise that most of Europe—including England—signed on to Protocol I. The United States, however, did not, precisely because the protocol's loosening of traditional just-war strictures would have the effect of protecting, and thus encouraging, irregular forces like terrorist organizations that pose a lethal threat to civilian populations. This disagreement between the U.S. and its key allies on so rudimentary a matter as what rules should apply to the treatment of nonstate combatants has caused no small number of problems in recent conflicts, including NATO's operations in the Balkans and coalition activities in Afghanistan and Iraq. The strains have induced Washington to fudge its opposition to Protocol I—formally opposing it but, for example, suggesting in such authoritative publications as the 2002 edition of the Army's *Operational Law Handbook* that much of its substance is "either legally binding as customary international law or acceptable practice though not legally binding."

Unfortunately, this purposeful ambiguity has not only fostered uncertainty about what the law requires but has created a platform for domestic activists whose interventions have redounded to the benefit of terrorists at the very time we are most threatened. Thus, Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, warned in a December 2002 letter to President Bush that our treatment of al Qaeda detainees held at Guantanamo Bay could place the U.S. in violation of Protocol I. Skirting the inconvenient fact that the U.S. is not a sig-

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natory to the protocol, Roth deftly observed that the document "is recognized as restating customary international law"—which makes his position sound materially similar to the American Army's.

Still, ambiguity aside, Protocol I has never been ratified and as such is not binding on the United States. I hasten to add that this is immaterial as far as the Iraqis held at Abu Ghraib are concerned. Iraq is a party to the Geneva Conventions; its military personnel, apprehended in wartime, were POW's; and the U.S. conceded as much at the beginning of hostilities. Thus, even mild forms of abuse, much less the nightmarish indignities that occurred at Abu Ghraib, are violations of international law.

As for captured al Qaeda terrorists, however, none of this should be taken to suggest that it was, or is, improper to subject them to far more aggressive techniques of interrogation than can be applied to POW's. But torture? That is another matter.

LET ME spell it out. It is illegal in the United States, under any circumstances, to torture *anyone*—even unlawful combatant terrorists who may have information about ongoing plots that, if revealed, could save thousands of lives. Period.[2]

There are two reasons for this, neither of them having to do with how one chooses to interpret the murky language of Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions (the one proscribing torture of some, or all, detainees). The first reason is that the United States is a signatory to an international treaty barring torture: this is the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The treaty is dated December 10, 1984 and was ratified in 1994, thus earning the force of binding law. The second reason is that federal law also categorically prohibits torture.

What constitutes torture under these laws? In Article 1 of the UN convention, torture is expressly and very broadly defined as any act, done at the direction or with the knowing acquiescence of a public official, by which

> severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind.

What about exigent circumstances? What about a state of active combat in which causing severe "physical or mental" discomfort to a captive might elicit intelligence that will save the lives of troops? What about a war against a terrorist network in which nonlethal torture against a known mass murderer might induce him to reveal plans, say, to detonate a nuclear device in New York Harbor? The treaty turns a deaf ear. In Article 2, it states flatly: "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." Not content with that, the convention dictates (in Article 16) that each signatory state must "undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment" even if they are not so severe as to "amount to torture as defined in Article 1."

Pertinent questions arise here for Americans. What about the death penalty? What about when the police cause severe physical harm to a suspect during a disputed arrest? Well, such matters are indeed exempted from the treaty: its definition of torture excludes "pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to lawful sanctions." More importantly for our purposes, the U.S. Senate, in ratifying the treaty, registered some stringent caveats, insisting on the preservation of capital punishment and limiting our acceptance of the proscription of "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment" to the relevant understandings enshrined in the "Fifth, Eighth, and/or Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution."

This was critical. As is well known, the Eighth Amendment bars "cruel and unusual punishments." But, as Alan M. Dershowitz reminds us in his 2002 book, *Why Terrorism Works*, American courts, including the Supreme Court, have held that its protection extends only to those already convicted of crimes; that is, the "punishments" it regulates are those meted out *after* guilty verdicts. Similarly with the government's mandate under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to provide "due process of law": again, that term pertains almost exclusively to judicial proceedings and its substantive content is, to put it mildly, highly debatable.

Let us assume, for example, that the Abu Ghraib abuses were deemed to fall short of the "severe pain or suffering" needed to qualify as "torture." Could a humiliated prisoner find recourse in the "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment" provision of the UN treaty? No, according to Der-

[2] The very clarity of the proscription is what prompted controversy earlier this month when reports emerged that government lawyers had struggled unconvincingly in 2003 to craft ways around these laws.

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showitz: his plight has nothing to do with judicial proceedings—he is being held by the military in wartime. Indeed, Dershowitz contends that the Senate's caveats limit the applicability not only of the treaty's "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" clause but even of its proscription against torture itself.[3]

Whatever qualifications may attach to the treaty, however, it cannot credibly be argued that torture is permissible—that is, beyond the reach of U.S. law—as long as it occurs outside the parameters of a judicial proceeding. That is because, fulfilling an aspiration expressed in the torture convention, the U.S. in 1994 enacted stringent anti-torture laws of its own.[4] In some ways, these laws define torture even more broadly than the UN convention. They proscribe any act (other than those incident to lawful sanctions like the death penalty) that is "specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering." In other words, and contrary to the UN treaty's own slightly narrower definition, an act need not be motivated by a purpose to obtain information, to punish, or to intimidate for it to be considered torture in American law.

Nor is that all. Federal law also makes "severe mental pain or suffering" actionable with respect to a wide variety of menacing behavior. As long as mental harm is "prolonged," it is grounds for torture charges if the harm results from the intentional or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering; from the administration or threatened administration of "mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or the personality"; from a "threat of imminent death"; or from threats that another person will imminently be subjected to such abuses. Not only those who engage in such behavior but those who conspire to engage in it, even if they are unsuccessful, are subject to prosecution.

If such behavior results in death, it may itself be punished by the death penalty; in other cases, it may be punished with up to twenty years' imprisonment. Nor does it matter where in the world the offense takes place; an American citizen may be prosecuted, and so may a foreign torturer who happens to be found on U.S. soil.[5] As a matter of law, then, torture in this very expansive understanding is absolutely prohibited. The only question remaining is: should it be?

JUST IMAGINE, in this culture, having the temerity to say out loud: "I am in favor of torture." One might as well declare oneself in favor of child molestation (or tobacco). In point of fact, however, many people—probably most people—who claim to be opposed to torture are not against it in all cases or in every form. Many, indeed, are no doubt secretly relieved that it goes on regardless of what the laws and the regnant pieties may dictate.

Seventy percent of Americans, all of whom presumably oppose killing, favor the death penalty. A comparably sizable number who oppose abortion favor its availability in cases of rape, incest, or where the life of the mother is at risk. All sensible people oppose the slaughter of innocent civilians, but an overwhelming number favor war if the evil it seeks to defeat is worth fighting against, even if war will ineluctably lead to the slaughter of innocent civilians.

Torture is not meaningfully different. Considered in a vacuum, it is a palpable moral evil. Moral evils, however, do not exist in a vacuum; they exist in collision with other evils, and sometimes we are forced to choose. Ask the average person if he opposes torture and the answer will surely be yes. But present him with a real-world scenario and the answer may well change.

Let us posit a terrorist, credibly believed to have murdered thousands of people. Suppose this terrorist is aware that a radiological bomb will be detonated momentarily in the heart of a major metropolis, but is refusing to impart the details to interrogators. Now, suddenly, black and white becomes gray: perhaps there are worse evils than some forms of torture. That does not mean our average person "favors" torture, but he may well be amenable to keeping it on the table as an option, and henceforth not so disposed to declare confidently that he opposes it in any form under all circumstances.

The obverse goes for the *proponent* of torture. As Dershowitz notes, arguments for torture are often crudely cast in terms of raw numbers: e.g., the torture of one guilty person would surely be justified to prevent the torture or death of a hundred innocent persons. But would it, without qualification? Are there lengths to which proponents might be unprepared to go? Of course there are. The vast majority of people who would favor torture in this case would oppose it if the form of abuse were inhumanly grisly; most would probably oppose a method that might lead to death (although that too might change if the situation were dire enough and especially if the person to be tortured were already facing execution). Moreover,

[3] *Why Terrorism Works*, p. 136. I respectfully disagree: the Senate's caveats apply only to the "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" clause, not to torture. See, for example, *Senate's Advice & Consent* (www.umn.edu/humanrts/usdocs/tortres.html); and see also Douglass Cassel, "The United States and the Torture Convention: A Useful Dialogue," *Center for Human Rights Commentaries* (May 24, 2000).

[4] Codified under Title 18, U.S. Code, Sections 2340, 2340A & 2340B.

[5] The 1991 Torture Victim Protection Act, codified under Title 28, U.S. Code, Section 1350, note.

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most if not all people open to the rare application of torture in order to prevent terrorist acts would be immovably opposed if the torture involved abusing moral innocents—like harming a terrorist's children to induce him to talk—or in the absence of persuasive grounds for believing a terrorist attack was imminent.

All of which is to suggest that a significant gap exists between our wishes and reality. This is hardly unusual, either in life or in law. Take the canons of ethics that govern the behavior of attorneys. They are divided into two sections: ethical considerations and disciplinary rules. The former are the high principles that lawyers are enjoined to emulate; the latter are threshold commands of which they must not fall short on pain of sanction. So it is with torture. Even as we sincerely aspire never to resort to it, we are required to acknowledge that there are some instances in which it might be employed; therefore, it is incumbent upon us to regulate how and under what circumstances that could permissibly be done, and to prosecute aggressively those who step outside the parameters we undertake to define.

THIS CONCLUSION, however reluctantly arrived at, is informed in part by the unpersuasiveness of the tactical and moral arguments parroted ubiquitously by the opponents of torture in the wake of Abu Ghraib. On the tactical level, it has been repeatedly asserted that torture simply does not work. The victim, it is said, has such a powerful incentive to tell the torturer what the torturer wants to hear that anything he says is by definition unreliable.

This claim might be made about countless other human endeavors in which inducements to act for ignoble reasons are similarly rampant, from politics to business to police work. It is thoroughly specious. A witness tempted to cooperate by the promise of a lenient sentence has a powerful motive to testify falsely to a version of events that he thinks might improve the prosecutor's case. A defendant who testifies in his own behalf has a different but no less strong incentive—namely, avoiding jail or perhaps death—to give a false exculpatory account. In neither situation is it necessarily the case that the witness will lie, or that, if he does, the lie will escape notice. Information from witnesses beset by intense pressure is inherently suspect but far from intrinsically unreliable.

Torture is no different. The victim may have been given an incentive to say what he thinks his torturer wants to hear, but that does not mean his compelled words are untrue. Nor does the victim necessarily even know what his torturer wants to hear. Nor can he know that he will not be tortured further if he intentionally misleads his tormentor. In fact, it could just as plausibly be asserted that torture is an ironclad guarantee of honesty as of misinformation. Neither statement holds water as an absolute, and, on the level of tactics, neither offers a sound reason either to permit or prohibit torture. As Dershowitz documents in detail, torture has been known to be a very effective method to get at truth; that it is not foolproof is hardly a reason to prohibit its selective use.

Then there is the moral argument: torture is an abomination so profound that permitting it, even if limited to rare and dire emergencies, constitutes an indelible blight on a society and its laws. So stated, the proposition has undeniable appeal. But "torture" is a loaded word. No one, it is fair to say, favors a policy of complete laissez-faire. What is envisioned instead is the administration of pressure that is capable of causing extreme pain—Dershowitz gives the example of sterile needles forced under the fingernails—but is nonlethal.

To be sure, even reading or thinking about such practices may make the teeth clench and the stomach churn. But consider: when sufficiently provoked, we already permit far worse. Capital punishment may be more humane than it used to be, thanks to lethal injection, but unlike torture it is forever. If we were to offer a choice—severe pain or execution—to convicts on death row, can there be any doubt which most of them would elect? Our weapons of war are "smarter" than they used to be, with precision targeting and the rest, but they still kill, mutilate, and maim with much less discrimination than we comfort ourselves to imagine. Is torture, with just cause and creating far less devastation, morally worse just because it is inflicted in a room looking the victim in the eye rather than from thousands of feet in the air where victims are unseen?

Equally significant from the moral point of view, one should think, are the consequences of the *current* system, in which we mouth our opposition to all torture while knowing full well that forms of it are occurring, with greater frequency than should be acceptable to anyone, inside many officially civilized countries that are signatories to the UN convention. It is here that Dershowitz is at his most trenchant: true civil libertarians are required to concern themselves with real-world outcomes rather than with proclaimed intentions, whether cynical or pure-hearted. By imposing an absolute ban on something we know is occurring, we promote disrespect for the rule of law in general and abdicate our duty to enact tailored and meaningful regulations. Both of these failings have the jugger-

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naut effect of increasing the total amount of unjustifiable and otherwise preventable torture.

THE TASK, then, is to create controlled, highly regulated, and responsibly accountable conditions. Toward this end, Dershowitz has proposed the notion of torture warrants. Under such a system, the government would have to apply to a federal court for permission to administer a predetermined form of nonlethal torture. The warrant would be issued only on a showing of reasonable grounds for believing that a catastrophe was impending, that the person to be subjected to torture had information about this event, that he had been given immunity (meaning, his statements could not be used against him in court and therefore he could not invoke the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination as a basis for refusing to answer), and that he had nevertheless remained silent.

Other conditions might be added. There could be limitations on who would be eligible for such treatment: for example, convicted terrorists or those who, even if not previously convicted, could be demonstrated to be terrorists according to some rigorous standard of proof. Application would have to be made with the approval of a high-ranking government official—the decision could not be entrusted to a twenty-three-year-old reservist assigned as custodian of a brig for mass murderers. Since torture would now be permitted, under stricture and with scrupulous judicial monitoring, no excuse would exist for engaging in torture outside the process, and those shown to have done so would be vigorously prosecuted.

In my estimation, this is a worthy proposal, far superior to the current hypocrisy that turns a blind eye to that which it purports to forbid. But my own approach, although based on the same underlying aims—minimizing the instances of actual torture and making its application more forthright, more transparent, and more accountable—is somewhat different. The struggle against militant Islamic terrorism, I believe, calls for an across-the-board rethinking of our current system as it relates not only to interrogations but also to the detention of unlawful combatants and to the trials of members of international terrorist networks, which our judicial system and its due-process standards are not designed to accommodate.

Elsewhere I have proposed the establishment of a national-security court, structured along the lines of the current Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.[6] This would be a tribunal, drawn from the national pool of federal judges, that would have jurisdiction over, and develop an expertise in, matters of national security. It would monitor the detention of terrorist captives (deferring to the executive branch's decision to detain in the first place), and it would conduct trials of terrorists whom the government elected to charge under special rules that would apply only in national-security cases. This would replace the current paradigm in which the enlightened procedures of our criminal-justice system, designed to protect Americans accused of crimes and presumed innocent until proved otherwise, has been warped as we strain to apply them to terrorists in whose hands those same procedures imperil public safety.

Refining our consideration of torture would be of a piece with this proposed overhaul. With torture strictly limited to national-security matters, and unavoidably involving highly classified information about terrorist networks, the new national-security court would be the place to consider, and monitor the execution of, torture warrants. These could be sought, in turn, only by the Attorney General or by a high-ranking Justice Department official designated for this purpose by the Attorney General.

Centralizing this sensitive matter in a single court would ensure that the standards developed for warrants win rigorous adherence rather than (as in Dershowitz's proposal) being subject to tinkering by hundreds of federal judges in scores of districts throughout the country. It would also ensure speedy determinations—a critical point since torture would be permitted only under circumstances of imminent peril. Warrants would undoubtedly be rarely sought and rarely granted, but a judge who had previously dealt with even one would be in a far better position to decide quickly than a judge for whom this was uncharted territory. To bolster the new system's integrity and effectiveness, periodic reports would be made to the appropriate committees of Congress.

It goes without saying that amending our laws to permit limited, regulated torture would unleash torrents of obloquy throughout the world, not least in the Islamic countries and in Europe—two places, it must be observed, with shameful legacies of ruthless prisoner abuse. Nevertheless, our cause would be just: to demonstrate our seriousness about dealing with torture, to reduce its incidence, to make its practitioners accountable, and to ensure that in this new kind of war that is almost entirely about intelligence, we are not unduly deprived of information that may save thousands of lives.

Abu Ghraib presents an opportunity to deal with this wrenching issue in a practical, responsible, and honorable way. The wrong would lie in failing the summons.

[6] "Abu Ghraib and Enemy Combatants," *National Review Online*, May 11, 2004.

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How the Feminists Saved Marriage

Sam Schulman

RADICAL FEMINISTS once aspired, in the name of women's freedom, to abolish the institution of marriage. In the event, not only did they fail to do that, but the preservation of marriage became, in a way, the movement's chief if wholly unintended accomplishment. What now threatens to end marriage is not feminism but something else, and that something may signal the end of the era of feminism as well.

But before entering these thickets, it may be worth stepping back for a moment.

Feminism as we know it began with a lurch a generation ago. It has not subsided to this day, even though every man who was over thirty years old at the time of the movement's inception—and therefore, by definition, not to be trusted—has now reached retirement age. In the next while, virtually every surviving member of that legendary species, the Male Chauvinist Pig, will have become superannuated, and the old rocking chair will envelop what is left of the Patriarchy.

A female letter-writer to COMMENTARY in February 1971 summed up that supposedly incorrigible gang of glass-ceiling-enforcers, coffee-demanders, "gal"-sayers, bottom-pinchers, and old-boy-networkers.[1] Any young woman trying to enter the American business world, she wrote, had to be prepared for an experience resembling "both the harem of the Grand Turk and the salt mines of Siberia." What, then, she asked rhetorically, was the reason for the "really wild surge of Women's Lib feeling" sweeping the country? Her answer: "the Men." Well, soon, the Men—at least those Men—will be gone.

Who is left? A generation of working adults who, in most Western countries, have lived their entire maturity under a feminist regime whose triumph was still unimaginable in 1968 but which by 1972 had become fully installed and was functioning reasonably smoothly. As for the villains—those all-powerful, multifarious, cunning males, driven to defeat the legitimate aspirations of an oppressed class—the idea that they were an organized force turned out to be a legend, although a very useful one.

This is not to say that the over-thirty generation did not abound in individual male creeps. Rather it is to say that, contrary to feminist myth, the creeps were far outnumbered by men who, by and large, accepted the new situation with remarkable flexibility and a cheerful lack of resentment, and in an orderly way. The entire working population that remains has now lived in a world created by the feminist ideologies of the late 1960's, the accomplishments of the women of my own generation (I was a member of the college class of 1971) whom they inspired, and the acquiescence of the men who

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[1] She was responding to Midge Decter's still-definitive article, "The Liberated Woman," October 1970.

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were expected to fight back but instead simply did what was demanded of them.

BUT THE world of work was only one of feminism's targets. The other was marriage. This fundamental human institution had played a central role in the early history of feminism, the feminism that predated the contemporary variety. Indeed, the demand for freedom in marriage came long before the demand for a place in the political and business world. To many in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the reform of marriage was nothing less than a matter of life and death, the source of all that would follow: Nora's protestation to Helmer in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879)—"I am an individual, just as much as you are"—marked the beginning not just of the legal revaluation of women's rights within marriage but of a sweeping cultural revaluation of women's place in the world.

The various forms taken by the early women's movement—seeking education, the vote, the right to join professions, the right to work in any job—all began with the readjustment of the legal relationship between men and women in the home. Nora wanted an existence in which her marriage no longer completely defined her. Just so, millions of women wanted, on the one hand, to be able to control their own legal and material destiny and, on the other, to be free of male authority, which could operate nearly unchecked within the home as far as the law allowed.

The struggle to make marriage bearable (or, failing that, divorce possible) for modern, middle-class women was long and intricate. But by the time contemporary feminist thought began to articulate itself in the 1950's and 1960's, something had changed. Marriage—reformed or not—had become passé. Moving far beyond Nora's demand for a recognition of her individuality, mid-20th-century feminists decided that what marriage needed was not reform but demolition. For them, marriage was itself the enemy, and its abolishment a precondition of the feminist revolution, if not that revolution's main goal. Marriage, they wrote, was the altar of the patriarchy, and it had to be smashed before women could be free.

Just to be clear about it, I am speaking not of the movement's rank and file or, for that matter, of its liberal publicists and apologists. Like every such movement, feminism had its Robespierres and its Girondists. Nevertheless, of the leading, widely quoted, agenda-setting ideologues of 1960's feminism—Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Juliet Mitchell, Kate Millett, and the rest—it is important to remember that not a single one thought of marriage as anything but an obstacle to women's liberation. All agreed that a refusal to marry—call it the Lysistrata strategy—would be the beginning of the final struggle to overthrow male supremacy. In this negative sense, marriage was feminism's testing-point.

HERE, HOWEVER, history has thoroughly defeated the expectations of the 1960's feminists. After 35 years, one can hardly say that marriage has been ended, or improved, or, on balance, very much changed to the naked eye.

To the contrary. Rather than disposing of marriage, feminism made it more important to women than ever. The 1960's feminists blamed the "nuclear" or "patriarchal" family for uncountable evils. These terms of abuse have not altogether disappeared from our discourse—they survive in the writings of radical academics like Catharine MacKinnon—but they seem to strike most of today's upwardly striving women as quaint, if not wholly irrelevant, and off-campus one seldom hears them any longer. Women of all persuasions, from Gloria Steinem to Oprah Winfrey, still say they wish to be part of long-term sexual relationships in terms ratified or even sanctified by marriage. Men—whether "feminist males" or professionals, backyard barbecuers or NASCAR dads—are still, in the main, the objects of the drive to marry, not its initiators.

Why is this? Ironically, it is in large measure the unintended consequence of the changes demanded by feminists themselves in the other sphere of their activism—namely, the world of work. As Stanley Kurtz has observed, the connection between marriage and motherhood remains remarkably strong—and stronger in the United States than in any other Western country; yet, for women, the interval in human life available for marriage and children has shrunk dramatically. The pressures of school and work—getting the qualifications, entering the workforce, building one's career—eat up time: in our society, at least ten years after the age of eighteen. Because of biology, those ten years affect women differently from the way they affect men.

Emerging on the field of honor in their late twenties, with credentials and career (and, generally, sexual experience) in place, middle-class, professional women find they face a frighteningly brief window in which to make a marriage that will include children. For those women to whom it matters, this makes marriage-seeking an urgent, intense, and often anxiety-laden affair.

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There are other ironies in this situation, likewise unforeseen by the 60's feminists. Men remain marriageable—and obligingly fertile—at an age when they have already proved themselves materially successful. Once upon a time, a woman's potential for child-bearing and -nurturing might have been gauged by an informed examination of her physical attributes. But a modern man can hardly tell which nubile young woman of his acquaintance will turn out in the fullness of time to be a net asset, income-wise. At the same time, a woman who *has* become successful enough to be married for her money is likely to be a less than ideal candidate for motherhood. Despite the fact, then, that women have entered the workforce on equal terms with men, the limitations that a working career places upon their fertility has made marriage to an eligible male not less but more important to them than ever.

True, there is more to marriage than pregnancy and SUV's. There is the question of identity—what Nora had in mind when she remonstrated that she wanted to be not a wife first but a person. And then there is that peculiar aspect of the connection between men and women that is neither sexual nor legal nor financial but, for want of a better word, spiritual. Here the ironies cut every which way.

Feminism demanded equal rights and treatment for women. At the same time, and sometimes within the confines of the same book or manifesto, it reserved for women a special, higher status vis-à-vis men. That this was a paradox, even a contradiction—even an importation from the dread Patriarchy itself—has been noted many times by the movement's critics. To no avail. Even as the movement was raising the banner of equality in all things, it strove mightily to enforce a recognition of women's superiority—that quality which, in the words of the young Henry James, "woman always represents to the imagination of man," namely, "a diviner self than his own, a more private, a more sacred and intimate self than that wherewith nature endows him."[2] Although James's phrasing would nauseate any modern feminist, his description is accurate enough.

Marriage is the place where feminist-era women attempt to keep hold of their "sacred" character. Indeed, it is now obvious, as it was not to the 1960's feminists, that marriage, far from being the prison of the self, is the *only* setting where a woman can hope to exercise her privileges as a woman. Only to a husband—not to a boss, a team leader, a department head—can she *be* a woman, and only in marriage can she realize that elusive superior status to which feminism itself insisted on elevating her.

The great feminist objection to marriage in the age of sexual revolution—the fear of "losing one's identity"—has become an historical artifact. It seems only yesterday—1970—when the singer Carly Simon could fret aloud that, should she wed, "I'll never learn to be just me first/by myself." But I do not believe this concern has been uttered anywhere east of the Urals by any educated woman in the last twenty years. The problem for a woman in the real world has not been to find her identity within marriage, but to find marriage at all.[3]

So marriage has survived. Has it changed at all? There were some early changes at the margins, of course. Married women began to retain their father's family name, and men became willing to wear wedding rings. But if, in 1972, the women of my generation had been told that these trivial alterations in outward forms would not mark the beginning of a sweeping revolution but would be virtually its sole public accomplishment, they would have been disbelieving and appalled.

What, then, of private accomplishments? Did women, "inspired by the really wild surge of Women's Lib feeling," force a remodeling of the institution from within? It is certainly true that they raised the standard of what was thought to constitute an "acceptable" marriage. In this, however, they merely took another step in a process that had been going on for a long time.

Before the first marriage reforms of the mid-19th century, a woman yearning for a "good husband" would likely feel herself satisfied with a man who would not beat or imprison her. After the laws were altered to allow a woman her own property and to extend her control over her own person, a wife might yearn—like the mothers remembered by the lost boys in *Peter Pan*—for a "checkbook of her own." A hundred years later, both husbands and wives were being held to far higher, more interior standards: the standards, that is, of personal "fulfillment." Unlike poems, modern marriages have not merely to be, but to *mean*.

Of course, the higher the standard, the more easily will marriages fall short of it. Hence, in part, the burgeoning divorce rate. Sociologists point out, though, that many if not most divorces are gestures of *hope*—hope, precisely for self-fulfillment in mar-

[2] "Is Marriage Holy?," the *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1875.

[3] I do not mean to downplay the role played by the sexual revolution in creating this situation. The decade of the 1960's—with its new sexual mores, its triumphs of birth control and ultimately abortion—nearly succeeded in separating marriage entirely from sexuality. But for only one of the sexes: if women have come to need marriage as much as or more than ever, men have needed it less.

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riage—on the part of at least one member of the collapsed union. (That this hope is frequently delusory is another matter.) Besides, the rising divorce rate has itself been an inevitable byproduct both of greater prosperity—divorce requires surplus capital—and of the greater health of men *and* women, many more of whom now die in old age than are felled by disease or in childbirth, and hence are around long enough to become unbearable to their spouses. The demand for higher quality in marriage came about, and most likely would have come about, simply because of the grand sweep of history and of economic liberation, like the rising demand for cars that are not only functional but fun to drive.

But what about the specific effects on marriage of 1960's feminism? Were they really as limited as I have suggested?

Not quite. What has happened to marriage, it is true, is not a radical rearrangement of sexual roles: most surveys show that, when it comes to matters like childcare, housecleaning, and the like, the balance between women and men may have altered slightly but it has hardly equalized. In other ways, however, the balance has indeed shifted.

Partly on account of the harsh light trained on it by the feminist thinkers, the role of *men* in marriage has become an object of women's special concern, a role in need of careful tutelage. For many men of my class and age cohort, marriage has been turned into a didactic process—a primary "scene of instruction" (in Harold Bloom's useful bit of jargon), the place where they receive lessons not in a wise passiveness (think of Archie Bunker) but in how they need to live and, in short, grow up.

The drama of men's lives has changed. Formerly, it was accepted that a husband's character would be largely shaped by the world before he entered his marriage, and that marriage itself—and the assumption of responsibility for the lives of his wife and children—would merely finish the job. Choosing to marry was a sign that a man had attained something desirable, even necessary: maturity.

In our current dramas of maturation, by contrast, little is thought to have happened to a middle-class man in his thirties before his marriage. The idea seems to be that men are inherently and necessarily unformed, and that they must be formed *by* marriage. Men have shrunk—if not entirely thanks to feminism, then thanks to the changed material circumstances that helped bring about feminism's triumph. They have shrunk because they have lost *their* special status, as providers and protectors.

One can see the shrinkage in the writing of feminists themselves. In the furious polemics of the 60's and 70's, feminists spoke of men with far more respect, endowed them with far greater power and substance, than most men could possibly claim today. Germaine Greer, contemplating the marriages she had observed, ascribed to men a potential for rule and a power of self-love far superior to those of women. These were the qualities that had enabled men to succeed in the world to a degree Greer thought women could never attain, absent a total revolution. But then the revolution came, and at least some women and men switched places. One can see the effect in those marriages where the wives, especially the successful professionals among them, operate in the world of work in vivid, self-regarding, "empowering" ways, while the husbands tend (as it were) to sit drinking quietly and inexpressively in corners.

But one should not exaggerate. Some men of my generation, who formed their relationships in the decade of the 1970's, were indeed frightened for a while of losing the women they loved to "liberation." But I suspect that such escapes—like the wife's departure in the fictional marriage of *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979)—took place mostly in the case of older or longer-married couples, or in the case of young couples living in the hothouses of intellectual or academic milieux. The more frequent threat to marriage and family lay in the new kind of attraction between men and women in the workplace itself. This was not the story of two smitten wage-slaves, à la Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan in *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), but the story of an executive or manager who found the independent, intellectually engaged "new woman" of the 1970's more sympathetic and better able to appreciate his skills, courage, and sacrifice—ironically, his manliness—than a wife who stayed at home with the kids.

But the passage of time has remedied this situation, too, as the pre-1970 generation (Bill Agee and Mary Cunningham) has gone into retirement. The recent nuptials of Jack Welch and Suzy Wetlaufer mark the end of an era.

NONE OF it had to happen this way. Marriage would have ended in the last 30 years if women had desired it to. Here again is Germaine Greer in 1969, in a predictive mode:

> Ultimately the greatest service a woman can do to her community is to be happy; the degree of revolt and irresponsibility which she must

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manifest to acquire happiness is the only sure indication of the way things must change if there is to be any point in continuing to be a woman at all.

Germaine Greer notwithstanding, what has happened is very much the reverse. The effect of feminism on women's happiness has turned out to involve not "revolt and irresponsibility" but their opposites. Women's pursuit and acquisition of happiness through marriage have knit the "community" together, improved the behavior of men, and preserved women's value in men's eyes and in their own. The generation of parents and, now, grandparents that feminism brought into being is different from the unliberated generations of the past only in degree: paradoxically, they are slightly but distinctly *more* child-centered than were the parents of the 1950's and 1960's. They—we—have sunk into family life, that despised bogeyman of the feminist imagination, to a degree that is nothing short of astonishing.[4]

That middle-class marriage has continued at all is due to the will of the women most influenced by feminism. It is a matter of the internal demands of female dignity, bolstered by the lingering hold of traditional modes of behavior. Whereas, in the public world, the "other" feminism has flattened the differences between men and women and subjected both sexes equally to the demands of competition and cooperation, somehow, in the private world, those differences still matter. The valences have shifted, but the structure holds.

But feminism has been in power long enough to become sclerotic in its reactions. Like the British garrison in Singapore in 1940, it has erected secure defenses against all possible threats from the one direction where it mistakenly expects an attack to emanate—namely, the generic "Right." Its own myth of origin, in which women heroically overthrow a vicious patriarchy that is eternally plotting its revanchist "backlash," has blinded the remnants of the movement to the real threat. The final irony is that what will end the age of marriage and of feminism alike is a threat not from the Right but from the Left.

I have in mind, of course, the long-term effects of the sexual revolution, including the spread of cohabitation, single motherhood, the gay-liberation movement, and the recent, increasingly successful effort to extend marriage rights to homosexuals and thence, inevitably, to absolutely anyone. The last-named development in particular marks a steep loss in the special protections that marriage has always offered to women. Whatever benefits gay marriage may bring to homosexual couples, the community, by giving the protection of marriage to all and sundry, will have effectively taken it away from women specifically.

It is the cumulative effect of these trends that, if anything, will prove fatal to the regime under which women and men have, for the most part, continued to thrive. With their triumph, the sway of contemporary feminism—its ability to embrace the superiority of women along with their equality (and their vulnerability)—will end, and with it women's leverage as a sex over men.

What will ensue then is hard to foresee. My own suspicion is that the demands made 35 years ago by figures like Ti-Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone may come to seem prophetic after all: the demands, that is, for the abolishing of marriage, the withering away of any sustained relationship between one man and one woman, the ushering-in of an age of random and casual sexual intercourse, the sexualization of children for the sake of adult pleasure.[5]

All of this, now forgotten, was part of the original program of radical feminism. Thankfully it did not come to pass. Instead, against every expectation, feminism helped bring into being a kind of bulwark against the dehumanizing vision of its own New Left roots. How strong a bulwark it is, we shall see in the next decade as it comes under challenge by newly resurgent and far more sweeping visions of antinomian sexuality, some of them operating—for such is the cunning of history—in the name of marriage itself.

[4] In 1996 James Atlas recorded his own astonishment at this state of affairs in an admirably candid essay in the *New Yorker* titled "The Fall of Fun." There he ruefully compared the depressingly early-to-bed lives of today's literary professionals, of whom he himself is a representative figure, with the sexier, messier, rowdier, and altogether more interesting lives of their recent forebears. To his catalog of the putative causes for the decline of adult fun—the high price of urban real estate, baby-boomer fussiness about exercise (pro) and smoking and drinking (con)—many (though surprisingly not Atlas himself) would surely add the influence of feminism.

[5] These were among Firestone's set of "minimal demands" in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970).

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In Search of "Righteous Arabs"

Robert Satloff

DENIAL OF the Holocaust is a recurring theme of Arab politics—a staple not only of radicals, both secular and Islamist, but of the mainstream as well. Borrowing methods and motifs from their European and American counterparts, Arab deniers wrap their arguments in pseudo-scientific scholarship, discounting (or denying) the numbers of dead, equating the Holocaust with lesser crimes, denigrating its historical uniqueness, or reversing history to ascribe to present-day Jews the role of "Nazi" persecutors of Palestinians. So routine has this Arab form of Holocaust denial become that it did not seem shocking when the first-ever Palestinian prime minister, the relatively moderate Mahmoud Abbas, turned out to have earned his (Soviet) doctorate with a dissertation expressing doubt about the Nazi extermination of six million Jews.

A heartening trend in recent years is that a number of figures in the Arab world have begun to address this pervasive phenomenon, and to deplore its effects. Their motives vary. Some want simply to correct the inaccuracy of Arab historiography. Others seek to remove an ugly stain on Arab intellectual and political culture. Still others seem to hope that Arab recognition of the crime of the Holocaust will induce Jews and Zionists to acknowledge, in turn, the "crime" of Israel's existence. Finally, some sincerely believe that expressions of empathy with Jewish suffering may help overcome deep-rooted psychological impediments to Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Such, for instance, appears to have been the impulse behind the May 2003 visit to Auschwitz by a joint delegation of Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews.

Despite these halting signs of progress, however, Holocaust denial remains a powerful orthodoxy—so powerful that dissenters often feel compelled to speak under the cloak of anonymity.* Moreover, the dissent is limited in its scope, directed either toward acknowledging the facts of the Nazi Holocaust or displaying sympathy with its victims. Out of bounds is any effort to explore the intersection of the Holocaust with Arab history itself.

For the Holocaust, although overwhelmingly a European story, was not solely a European story. It was an Arab story, too, and the dimensions of that story are much larger and more complex than such by now familiar facts as the pro-Nazi exploits of Haj Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem, or the largely unsuccessful propaganda rants by the Nazis' Arabic mouthpieces on Radio Berlin.

From the outset, German plans to persecute and eventually to exterminate the Jews extended throughout all the lands Germany and its allies

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* A case in point is the Arab professor of English literature who contributed a brilliant essay to an Internet-based "virtual symposium" on Arab views of the Holocaust. See www.legacy-project.org/symposium/comments.html?Symposium_Paper=1&ShowID=1.

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hoped to conquer. That included a great Arab expanse in North Africa, extending from Casablanca to Tripoli and onward to Cairo—a region that was home to a half-million Jews. Indeed, the country-by-country plan of extermination laid out at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin in January 1942 makes sense only if the wildly inaccurate figure for the Jews of unoccupied France—700,000—is understood to include France's North African possessions: the colony of Algeria and the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia.

In the brief period when they had a chance, the Germans and their allies made a significant start toward their murderous goal for North Africa's Jews. For three years—from the fall of France in June 1940 to the expulsion of German troops from Tunisia in May 1943—the Nazis, their Vichy French collaborators, and their Italian Fascist allies applied in these areas many of the same tools that would be used to devastating effect against the much larger Jewish populations of Europe. These included not only statutes depriving Jews of property, education, livelihood, residence, and free movement, but also forced labor, confiscations, deportations, and executions.

Virtually no Jew in North Africa was left untouched. Nearly 10,000 suffered in labor camps, work gangs, and prisons, or under house arrest. By a stroke of fortune, relatively few perished, many of them in the almost daily Allied bombings of Tunis and Bizerte in the winter and spring of 1943 when the Germans forced Jewish workers to stay at their jobs clearing rubble. But if U.S. and British troops had not driven the Germans from the African continent in 1943, the 2,000-year-old Jewish communities of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and perhaps Egypt would almost certainly have met the fate of their brethren in Europe.

Many Arabs today would respond that all this has nothing to do with Arab history. It has to do, rather, with the history of colonialists who played out their designs on Arab soil; Arabs had no part in it, they would say. But they would be wrong. Just as in Europe, most members of the local populace stood by and did nothing; a few helped—the Arab world, too, had its "righteous Gentiles"; and some made matters demonstrably worse.

The story of the Holocaust in Arab lands has three main divisions: the extension of Vichy's "state anti-Semitism" to France's North African possessions; the imposition of Mussolini's anti-Jewish regime in Libya; and the six-month occupation of Tunisia by German and Italian troops. Other French possessions in the Levant—Syria and Lebanon—were affected by Vichy, but to a much lesser degree and for a considerably briefer time. There was also the special case of Iraq, which in 1941 witnessed a rapacious campaign against Jews in the course of a short-lived military coup by Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, a Nazi sympathizer; but neither the Germans nor their other European partners were central actors in that drama.

Particularly hard hit was Tunisia, the only Arab country to come under direct German occupation. In just six months, from November 1942 to May 1943, the Germans and their local collaborators implemented a forced-labor regime, confiscations of property, hostage-taking, mass extortion, deportations, and executions. They required thousands of Jews in the countryside to wear the Star of David, and they created special *Judenrat*-like committees of Jewish leaders to implement Nazi policies under threat of imprisonment or death. Tunisia was also the training ground for some of the most notorious Nazi killers—like SS Colonel Walter Rauff, who had earlier invented the mobile death-gas van.

Nevertheless, of the three European countries that brought the Holocaust to Arab lands, the most malevolent by far was France. In Morocco and, especially, Algeria, France implemented strict laws against local Jews, expelling them from schools, universities, and government employment, confiscating their property, and sending a number of local Jewish political activists to harsh labor camps. In some respects, Vichy was more vigorous about applying anti-Jewish statutes in Arab lands than in metropolitan France.

Not content with this, Vichy also dispatched more than 2,000 *European* Jews to forced-labor camps in North Africa. The origins of this tale lie earlier, in the 1930's, when France's relatively liberal Third Republic provided safe haven to thousands of Central European Jews fleeing their homelands while they still could. Many of these new arrivals promptly joined the French army. Indeed, when war arrived in 1939, a Jewish veterans' organization operating out of a single office in Paris reportedly registered 10,000 volunteers, all noncitizens, in a mere ten days.

But none of this made any difference. The collaborationist government established in 1940 under Marshal Pétain turned the Jews, both foreign and native-born, into ready scapegoats for France's shameful collapse at Nazi hands. As recent scholarship has definitively shown, the persecution of Jews under Vichy originated as a French, not a

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German, affair; eventually, thousands of French Jewish citizens would be herded into cattle cars, sent to notorious transit stations like Drancy, and then on to death camps in "the east."

It was, however, the foreign Jews living in France who first felt the brunt of the French defeat. For Vichy, the thorniest problem was presented by those who had volunteered for military duty and had been led to believe that their service to France would be repaid with legal residency and perhaps citizenship. Even hardened anti-Semites blanched at the idea of discharging Jewish soldiers one day and consigning them to death the next.

The deserts of France's Arab possessions offered a ready solution. One of the first acts of Pétain's government was to revive the old imperial idea of a trans-Sahara railway: a thousand miles of track across the sands that would drastically cut the travel time from Niger to Nice and bring the riches of Africa to the metropolis. To level the dunes, clear the rocks, lay the tracks, and mine the considerable deposits of coal and ore near the route, Vichy summarily dispatched more than 7,000 unwanteds to desolate corners of western Algeria and eastern Morocco. Most were political prisoners of various stripes—Spanish republicans, Communists, socialists, anti-Nazi Germans, Gaullists; also included were a smattering of Arabs and even a Japanese. More than 2,000 were Jews, who, unlike the rest, were deported not for their politics but for their religion.

THE PLACES where these unfortunates arrived were concentration camps, conceived by Frenchmen and filled with individuals whose only "crime" had been to flee fascist tyranny for the safety of a once-welcoming France. Soldiers and legionnaires, technically demobilized from their military service, were immediately compelled to sign contracts reclassifying themselves as "wartime labor conscripts," which meant they were subject to military discipline. Though the contracts stipulated the payment of a wage—typically, a few francs a day from the payroll of the Mediterranean-Niger Railway Company—few ever received any money. They were, in fact, prisoners in all but name.

Shipped southward by cattle car from the ports of Algiers and Oran, they were herded into camps from which there was no leaving; some died in the attempt. Given little food, water, or rest, they worked from dawn to dusk gathering, breaking, loading, and moving rocks. Medical care was virtually nonexistent. Having built stone casernes to house their French overseers, the prisoners themselves were consigned to tents; smuggled photographs show 40 individuals packed inside tents designed for eight. Their clothes and blankets were threadbare; often, they had no shoes.

Torture was common and frequent. According to later testimonies, the camp commandants and senior officers, mostly legionnaires themselves, were vicious anti-Semites, sadistic and often drunk, many of German origin or fascist sympathies. They were assisted by Arab and Senegalese guards, notorious for their cruelty. Any Arab or Berber watchman discovered showing sympathy for the Jews, secretly providing them with extra water, blankets, or rations, was quickly assigned to other duties and replaced by local guards whose ruthlessness was more reliable.

A 1943 British Foreign Office document, "Barbaric Treatment of Jews and Aliens in Morocco," records the testimony of Polish Jewish prisoners who made their way to London after being freed by the Allies. Here is one such testimony, describing a common method of torture:

> The *tombeau*—tomb—is a grave dug in the ground, two meters long, 40 centimeters deep and 60 centimeters wide. Men under punishment are confined to this tomb for various periods. . . . The minimum sentence is eight days and nights. The maximum survived was seventeen days and nights. In this case the victim was a Polish Jew called Rosenberg.
>
> Typical of the offenses which earned a man a stretch of *tombeau* was that of the German Jew Selgo. . . . Like all the others, he had to lie face up night and day. He had no covering, only a tattered Legion uniform with no underclothes. He was not allowed to move or change positions in the *tombeau*. An Arab was posted over the graves to see that the victims stayed rigidly still. . . .
>
> The only occasion when a man was allowed to raise his head a little was after a rainstorm when the graves filled with water. Then he was allowed a stone for a headrest to save him from drowning. As the subsoil was clay, the water would take three days to drain away. . . .
>
> [Foreign Legionnaire] Gayer or one of the other guards would bring the men their meals—one liter of water at 0800 hours, 250 grams of bread and a glass of water at 1200 hours, and another glass of water at nightfall. A man was allowed to relieve himself only during these three visits of the guard. If he could not do it then he had to do it in his clothes and lie in it. . . . As the majority of prisoners were suffering from severe and sanguinary dysen-

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> tery, a man lying in his own filth was the rule rather than the exception.
>
> Not many men were able to survive the longer sentences in the *tombeaux*. They succumbed to the appalling variation in temperature in every twenty-four hours. By day, an egg could be cooked hard in the sand within five minutes. By night the temperatures fell to near freezing point and in winter below it.

Another survivor, a German Jew named Harry Alexander whose story has been recorded for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, had managed to escape from Germany to France, where he planned to join the French army. Instead, he found himself on a freight train to Djelfa, a Vichy labor camp in the Algerian desert. "There were many ways to die" at Djelfa, he explained: "You had dysentery. You had malaria. A lack of food. A lack of water. Bitten by scorpions. Bitten by vipers . . . and you're dead in an hour." As for torture, a common form at Djelfa was "the fort," wherein French soldiers and Arab camp guards would

> tie your arms in the back and hang you on your arms naked for about two, three days. You would hang on your arms and every night they would come in and, when it's the coldest, hose you down with ice water and beat you about. . . . And when you got through hanging there, when they cut you down, you were not able to walk. In fact, you were lucky to be alive.

Thus far I have touched but lightly on the role of Arabs themselves in the events I have been recounting. There has been, indeed, scant writing about and little documentation of this side of things. But for the past two years, while living in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, I have tracked down stories of Arabs who played a role in the Holocaust, be they villains or heroes. With the help of researchers and investigators in ten different countries, I have been able to unearth the stories of dozens of such individuals.

Their number includes outright collaborators—i.e., Arabs who personally participated in the persecution of Jews. Among these were an Arab sadist who commanded a Jewish work brigade in the Tunisian countryside; another Tunisian, Hassen Ferjani, convicted by a French military tribunal of having informed to the Germans on three Jews fleeing across Allied lines, an act leading to their deportation and eventual beheading; Arab patrolmen who tracked down Jewish escapees from forced-labor camps; Arabs who walked alongside German soldiers, pointing out Jewish homes and property for confiscation; the Arab accomplice to a German soldier who raped a Jewish woman in La Marsa, outside Tunis; and Arab camp guards who urinated on the heads of Jewish forced laborers as they lay buried to their necks in the sands of Algeria.

In addition to these individuals were the hundreds of Arabs who volunteered to join Axis and pro-Axis forces like the Phalange Africaine, the Brigade Nord Africaine, and the German-Arab Training Battalion. And then there were the nameless thousands throughout North Africa who extorted money and property from Jews at their moment of abject weakness.

As for the heroes who helped save Jews from pain, injury, indignity, and perhaps death, they included:

- the Bey of Tunis and, more famously though less conclusively, the Sultan of Morocco, both of whom bucked their Vichy and German overlords to provide vital moral support to their Jewish subjects, as well as practical help to a number of Jewish personalities and their families;
- the Arab country squire who opened his farm to 60 Jews escaping from an Axis forced-labor camp in Tunisia's Zaghouan valley;
- a middle-aged Arab notable in the Tunisian seaside town of Mahdia who, upon learning that a German officer was bent on raping a local Jewish woman, a mother of three, whisked away the entire family in the middle of the night and kept them hidden on his farm for several weeks until the Germans quit the town;*
- the Arab politician who secretly warned and offered shelter to his longtime Jewish friends when Nazi SS troops were planning raids against the Jewish leadership in Tunis;
- religious leaders in Algiers who forbade any Muslim from serving as a Vichy-appointed conservator of Jewish property;
- Arab inmates of a prison camp in the Algerian desert who forged an anti-fascist bond with their Jewish prison mates;
- Arab soldiers whose response to shoot-to-kill orders was to fire wide, purposely missing helpless Jewish laborers;
- and, in faraway Paris, the rector of the municipal mosque, Si Kaddour Bengabrit, who is said to have given Jewish children counterfeit certificates of good standing as Muslims, thereby enabling them to escape deportation.

* In October 2003, this woman's daughter, Anny Boukris, told her family's story in detail for the first time to an interviewer I arranged to visit her in Palm Desert, California; she died eight weeks later. I was able to confirm key details of the story in a May 2004 visit to Mahdia.

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Similarly not to be forgotten are those Arabs who suffered alongside Jews—as prisoners in Vichy concentration camps or, as was the case in Tunisia, as forced-laborers drafted once the Jewish community had exhausted its own manpower. A small number of Arabs and Berbers also participated in one of the war's most daring and overlooked exploits: the takeover of key sites in Algiers by the predominantly Jewish underground, an action that eased the amphibious entry of thousands of U.S. and British troops on the night of Operation Torch in November 1942.

TAKEN TOGETHER, this history is rarely told, and the heroes, in particular, have never been recognized. Of the more than 19,000 "righteous Gentiles" honored by Israel's Yad Vashem for rescuing Jews from death during the Holocaust, not a single one is an Arab (though there are a number of Muslims, including Turks, Bosnians, and Albanians). In my view, the reason for this lacuna is dual: few have ever looked for "Arab righteous," and fewer still have had an incentive to be found.

For Arabs, the legacy of World War II was soon overshadowed by two other developments: the conflict with Zionism over the fate of Palestine and the struggle for independence against European colonialism. By the late 1940's—and certainly by the time of the Suez crisis in 1956—the blurring of the state of Israel with "the Jews" was already a deeply embedded theme of Middle Eastern politics. For an Arab, there was little to be gained (and much to be lost) by being identified with the defense of Jews or of Jewish interests. Sultan Muhammad V of Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Habib Bourghiba, the secular leader of Tunisia's independence movement, were significant exceptions, noteworthy not least for their rarity.

For Jews, the situation was more complex. To many of those remaining in North Africa, memories of their horrible wartime experience were swiftly overtaken by the less systematic but often more violent anti-Zionism that compelled hundreds of thousands to quit their homes for Israel in the late 1940's and 1950's. Once in Israel, wartime memories were further obscured by the tension in that country between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. To the degree that the former jealously guarded their Holocaust legacy—theirs, after all, had been by far the greater calamity—the latter tended not to focus on theirs. Similarly neglectful were Holocaust historians and institutions; even today, one hears debate in Israel over whether it is even appropriate to use the term "survivors" for Jews from Arab countries who suffered Nazi-era racial laws and punitive actions.

An additional wrinkle concerns the odd position held by the small and still dwindling remnants of once-grand Jewish communities in Arab countries. Less than 2 percent of the wartime Jewish population is left in Morocco and Tunisia today; in Algeria and Libya, the communities are effectively extinct. Navigating between the Scylla of Islamic radicalism and the Charybdis of regime indifference to their fate, Jews in these countries have by and large opted for quiescence. This attitude even extends backward to their past history. Although in the course of my research I did come across Sephardi activists agitating for wider acknowledgement of the history of the Holocaust in Arab lands, none actually resides in an Arab land today.

But if these considerations help to explain the obscuring of the Arab encounter with the Holocaust, they hardly excuse it. When I began my research into this hidden history, my secret desire was to organize a commemorative event in May 2003 on the sixtieth anniversary of the Allied liberation of Tunisia. For the obvious reasons, I wanted it to take place in Auschwitz—as it happens, a handful of Tunisian deportees were eventually killed there—and I envisioned a ceremony that would bring together Tunisian government officials, scholars, journalists, local Jewish community leaders, and members of Tunisia's expatriate Jewish community.

My idea died when, traveling to Tunis, I asked my first interviewee, a prominent Arab historian, about the day his country was "liberated" from Nazi occupation. With a quizzical look on his face, he replied: "Liberation? What are you talking about? The departure of the Germans meant the return of the French, who were infinitely worse!"

And this rebuff was nothing compared with my reception by the children of one of my prime candidates for recognition as a "righteous Arab": Tunisia's wartime prime minister, Muhammad Chenik. Walking a dangerous line between the Germans and his longtime personal friendships with Jews, this Arab notable, according to various interviewees, had used his connections to warn Jewish leaders of impending arrests and had secured dispensations from forced labor for the sons of Jews he knew from his business days. He very likely saved Jewish lives, perhaps at risk to his own.

Whatever the motive behind these deeds—personal friendship, old business obligations, simple kindness—they were truly noble. Since I was intending to resurrect the story of this long-forgot-

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ten statesman, and bring honor to his name, I had expected his family to embrace the revelations I was offering them, or at the very least to thank me for my efforts. And indeed, the family members who gathered in their comfortable seaside villa to hear my tale were polite, generous, and welcoming, plying me with tray after tray of delicious sweets and several rounds of coffee and tea. But through the smiles and handshakes, it rapidly became clear that they wanted nothing to do with my story of their father's exploits. We have never heard about any of this, they insisted, and even if what you say is true, it does not amount to anything significant. Although they urged me to return with irrefutable proof, they offered no help, and it was obvious they hoped never to hear from me again.

Perhaps the hardest blow has been the silence that has greeted most of my entreaties to moderate, forward-thinking Arabs to assist in shedding light on this chapter of their history. For every positive response to a phone call or a posting on an Internet message board, there have been a dozen cold shoulders, unanswered faxes, or unfilled promises.

In October 2003, to take one example, I contacted the prominent Egyptian thinker Ahmed Kamal Abulmagd—widely considered one of the most moderate and open-minded of Muslim theologians, and certainly no Holocaust denier—after his appearance before an audience at the American University of Cairo, where he had participated in an exchange with the American ambassador. At one point in their discussion, Abulmagd had turned to the ambassador and said:

> We all condemn the policies of Hitler and the Holocaust, but enough is enough. There is a moment of saturation and, let me be very blunt on this, world Jewry is in danger because of the very irresponsible policies of the government of Israel, supported by some unaware leaders of the Jewish community in the United States. I hate to see a day where there is an unleashing of dormant general anti-Semitism, in Europe, particularly, and maybe in the United States. But we Arabs are not part of it. We are not part of the Holocaust. We never persecuted Jews.

In contacting Abulmagd, my purpose was not to persuade him to repudiate his remarks. On the contrary, I wanted to ask him to use his good offices in helping me gain access to Egyptian consular records from the late 1930's. Those files, I believe, may contain evidence of an "Arab Wallenberg," an Egyptian diplomat who I suspect provided marriage or birth certificates to German and Austrian Jews, enabling them to flee to Cairo and from there to freedom in London. Though one might think Egyptian officialdom would be eager to exploit proof of a great humanitarian act by an Egyptian diplomat, one that would burnish Egypt's bruised image in the United States, none of my requests to Cairo policymakers—some of whom, at the highest levels of government, I have known for more than fifteen years—has ever been acknowledged.

That is why I wrote to Abulmagd—twice. Noting the absence of a single Arab among Yad Vashem's list of "righteous" non-Jews, I begged for his intercession: "Didn't *some* Arabs help or rescue *some* Jews?," I asked. "And if indeed some Arabs did rescue some Jews, then isn't this the positive, constructive answer to Arab Holocaust denial?"

But the taboo against recognizing any Arab connection to the Holocaust, even in order to celebrate the deeds of a heroic Arab rescuer, is evidently too strong. I am still waiting for an answer.

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Latin American Crack-Up?

Mark Falcoff

ROUGHLY TWO decades have passed since most of Latin America turned away from authoritarian regimes, typically dominated by military institutions, and turned toward electoral democracy. The shift was drastic and in many ways historically unprecedented. With the notable exception of Castro's Cuba, every country in the region has now been governed by civilians chosen through universal suffrage.

Yet this long season of democratic renewal has left a bitter taste in the mouths of many Latin American citizens. In a recent region-wide survey, nearly 55 percent responded that they would support a return to dictatorship if doing so would solve their personal economic problems. This finding is all the more striking when one takes into account the parlous economic record of most military governments in the world over the past half-century.

At the same time, there has been a strong reaction against market-based economic reforms, or "neo-liberalism" as its critics like to call it. Along with nostalgia for strongmen decked out in epaulettes and brandishing swords, the dream of a nationalist-corporatist state—one that owns and controls much of the "commanding heights" of the economy—has likewise begun to reappear. As a corollary, much resentment is expressed against the United States, free trade, and foreign investment—the three being regarded as one and the same thing. Indeed, Washington's current project for a hemispheric free-trade area is treated in many quarters not as an opportunity to create new markets and new employment opportunities but as a dark plot to seduce and exploit the innocent Latins. Lately, there has been much talk (particularly in Argentina) of creating regional or sub-regional blocs as a solution to Latin American economic and social problems—as if clever diplomatic strategies or new political alignments could somehow permit whole countries to leapfrog over the stark facts of poverty, illiteracy, corruption, and plain mismanagement.

All of these currents are evident in many parts of Latin America, but the experience of two countries casts them in particularly unflattering relief. One is Venezuela, the other Bolivia.

At first blush it would seem that no two South American nations have less in common. Until recently, Venezuela had the highest per-capita income on the continent, Bolivia the lowest. Venezuela is a mixed-race society that faces the Caribbean and is strongly influenced by U.S. (and particularly South Florida) culture, while Bolivia, secreted behind the high Andean *cordillera*, is largely Indian with an intensely inward-looking perspective. Venezuela is strongly linked to the United States as a major source of imported oil. Bolivia's historic exports—silver and industrial metals—have been in decline

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for more than a half-century; today its major exports (apart from illicit materials used to process cocaine) are oil and gas, sold largely to its neighbors, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Until 1998 Venezuela was something of a model for Latin American democracy, boasting 40 years of uninterrupted civilian governments. For its part, Bolivia until very recently could count more presidents than years of independence.

Yet these two nations, different in so many ways, are moving in roughly similar directions—toward social conflict, political chaos, cultural decomposition, and very possibly civil war. In that large sense, both of them define the crisis of Latin American democracy today, a crisis that, especially in the case of petroleum-rich Venezuela, has unsettling implications for the United States.

Venezuela is a country at once blessed and cursed by its superabundance of oil. For many years, this made possible a society in which the military could be bribed to stay out of politics by means of high salaries and luxurious fringe benefits, while the state could use the royalties from petroleum exports to purchase broad political consensus at home. Venezuelan democracy was far from perfect, but for nearly four decades it stood in pleasant contrast to the often repressive regimes to its north and south. Unfortunately, at some point in the early 1980's the world price of oil declined sharply, and remained depressed for the rest of the decade. Suddenly the state found itself in reduced circumstances, sharpening the inherent contradictions of the system and ultimately serving to destroy its stability.

The current beneficiary of this by now long-lasting condition is the ultimate outsider, Hugo Chávez: a cashiered ex-army colonel who first came to the attention of his countrymen when he failed to overthrow President Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1992. Released from prison by Pérez's fatuous successor, Rafael Caldera, Chávez entered political life as a civilian. He gained the presidency in 1998 in what may turn out to have been his country's last truly competitive election for some years to come.

To understand the Chávez phenomenon, one needs to bear in mind three points. First, even in its best years, Venezuelan pluralism was highly limited. An accord reached among the three major parties as far back as 1958 had established a prearranged system of patronage. Instead of winner-take-all, the spoils of victory—in this case, government jobs, subsidies, contracts, and so forth—would henceforth be divided according to the electoral score achieved by each party. Even as the arrangement secured a remarkable degree of social and political peace, it acutely circumscribed political debate—with less up for grabs, there was correspondingly less incentive for the opposition to engage in a hard-hitting critique of any incumbent administration. Meanwhile, fourth or fifth parties were largely marginalized. Without serious competition, Venezuela eventually sank into a mire of corruption, widening the gap between the political elite and the populace.

The second point is this: Venezuelans are rightly persuaded that theirs is a rich country—in natural resources, that is. It has oil, gold, diamonds, bauxite, and minerals of all kinds. From this indisputable fact, however, Venezuelans erroneously conclude that if they are not doing well, it must be wholly the fault of those who govern them and who have robbed them of their patrimony. But this quite common conviction, which one hears expressed by people of the most varied social classes, is at best half-true. Yes, the politicians have robbed, and a state that manages too much of the economy is inefficient and wasteful (not to mention the invitation it offers to jobbery and dipping into the public till). But if oil prices had remained high in the 1980's, one probably would have heard nothing of it.

By an ironic twist of fate, oil prices in the period since Chávez took office in early 1999 have suddenly reversed course and headed for heights not seen since the early 1970's. Thanks to mismanagement and corruption, however, general welfare has not much improved. Far from it: by some estimates, as much as 80 percent of the Venezuelan population languishes in poverty. According to one recent report, fully 60 percent of all small and medium-sized enterprises—some 30,000 companies in all—have closed in the last four years. This complex of contradictions explains at once Chávez's rise to power, his persistent hold on a core constituency of about 30 percent of Venezuelans, and the burgeoning opposition to him that has been fueled largely by his failure to deliver the goods.

Thirdly, although Venezuela had once been one of the more socially integrated Latin American nations, it was then and is still now hampered by a great deal of unconfessed racism. Venezuelans tend to be an ethnic mix of Spanish, Indian, and African elements, but the business and old political elites are largely descended from aristocratic families dating back to the Spanish conquest plus more recent immigrants from Italy, Germany, and Portugal. With his obvious African and Indian inheritance, Chávez "looks" like Venezuela, much more so than any of his recent predecessors, and his railing

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against the "oligarchy" touches a deep chord in the slums of Caracas and small towns of the plains where people do not in the least resemble the elegant society figures one sees in the Sunday supplements or on television. On the other hand, there are limits to racial resentment as a political tool, and by deploying it, especially in the absence of concrete economic benefits, Chávez has invited an equally vitriolic reaction from his opponents.

IN MANY ways Hugo Chávez should provoke contempt as much as alarm. He is a sad copy of the young Juan Perón, of the early Fidel Castro, of Nasser, Qaddafi, and the whole range of populist-nationalist figures who have disfigured the landscape of Third World politics since the close of World War II. Like them, the Venezuelan strongman is afflicted by the delusion that he is a great revolutionary figure, even though, after five years in office, it is impossible to point to any "revolutionary" achievement.

Venezuelan oil was nationalized a quarter-century ago; the state Chávez inherited already dominated much of the economy; it was nonaligned in foreign policy and had correct and even cordial relations with Castro's Cuba. In each of these areas, Chávez has merely preserved and extended the status quo. Instead, his greatest innovation has been rhetorical. Every Sunday, the president takes to the airwaves to deploy barroom language against his opponents and to discourse grandly on the luminous future awaiting his country. Also, increasingly, he denounces the United States—even as Venezuela continues to provide the U.S. with oil. (It could hardly do otherwise, since PDVSA, the country's state oil company, owns no fewer than 10,000 gas stations here.)

Another way in which Chávez differs from his Venezuelan predecessors is that he finds the country far too small a stage for the role he feels called upon by history to play. Almost from the beginning, he began to dabble in the politics of other countries. It is an open secret that he has financed anti-establishment and radical indigenous movements in the Andean nations, and provided safe haven for Colombian guerrillas on Venezuela's poorly policed borders. He is keeping Cuba's Castro afloat with shipments of oil, in "payment" for which the island dictator dispatches to Venezuela doctors, sports trainers—and intelligence officers. To enhance his international standing, Chávez travels incessantly (he made more than 50 trips abroad during his first year in office) to deliver his message of anti-globalization and anti-Americanism. He even finances foreign books and "documentary" films about himself. With more than $20 billion in oil revenues at his disposal each year, he is in a position to do all of these things and more.

The biggest difference between Chávez and his predecessors, however, is that he sees himself destined to reshape Venezuelan politics according to an explicitly authoritarian template. He has already effectively turned the armed forces into a political party of his own, purging officers who object to turning the military into a partisan organization and buying the loyalty of flag ranks with off-budget appropriations. Plans have been announced to create "popular militias" if the military should prove less than loyal in a pinch. The supreme court, the electoral tribunal, and even the central bank have lost their independence, and Chávez's lawyers are toying with legislation to limit or end freedom of the press and independent electronic media.

For months now, the Venezuelan opposition—a wide range of elements from Left to Right—has been grasping at the one alternative permitted them: namely, a provision in the constitution ratified in 2000 that allows a recall referendum midway through any president's term. Earlier this year, they managed to pass the enormously high hurdle of collecting a sufficient number of signatures, and submitted their petitions to the proper authorities. After a series of delaying tactics—which included statements by Chávez that, come what may, the referendum would never be held—the electoral court validated the signatures in early June. The president's attitude is hardly surprising; although the opposition is itself deeply fractured, it is extraordinarily broad, and according to most surveys it would probably win by somewhere between 55 and 60 percentage points, perhaps even more.

MANY VENEZUELANS—and some outsiders—think their country is about to emerge as a continental version of Cuba. No doubt that is the way Chávez himself sees the future—indeed, he has said as much. But despite the obvious similarities, there are also many differences, and they should not be minimized.

Unlike Castro, Chávez did not lead a victorious revolution against a hated dictator and does not enjoy the kind of unlimited legitimacy that such an event confers, at least temporarily. The United States has never occupied Venezuela, and is not and has not been a focus of hatred and resentment.*

* In a recent survey of public opinion concerning the U.S., Venezuela was found to be one of the most favorably disposed countries in the world, and in Latin America the most favorably disposed.

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There is no local equivalent in Venezuela to United Fruit or any of the other dominant U.S. corporations that provided Castro with a convenient political target. Although Miami has suddenly become the venue of choice for Venezuelan professionals who can obtain a visa, the United States is unlikely to take the entire middle class off the Venezuelan president's hands as it so obligingly did for Castro. Finally, Venezuelans grew up under a democratic system and are accustomed to the legitimacy of opposition and debate, however limited. Such a political culture cannot be erased or forgotten overnight.

Whatever the outcome, Venezuelan politics appears to be on a collision course. If, in spite of the decision of the electoral court, Chávez in one way or another manages to avoid or postpone the referendum, the opposition will have no reason to continue operating within a peaceful framework. While Chávez controls the armed forces and police, weapons are very widespread. One incident might be sufficient to ignite a general conflagration.

But even if the referendum is held, and even if the opposition were to win, Chávez out of office would remain the most important single politician in the country. And those who succeed him would have no choice but to do demonstrably better than he. It is still far from clear that Venezuela's traditional parties understand where they failed in the first place, and new democratic forces—though widespread—have yet to provide a vision for the future or to capture the popular imagination.

It is, to say the least, an unenviable dilemma—and not just for Venezuela. Chávez in power is an unpleasant reality for the geostrategic interests of the United States, but civil war in Venezuela—with a politically uncertain outcome and the prospect of an actual interruption in the flow of oil, roughly 17 percent of our imports—is arguably worse.

A THOUSAND miles south lies Bolivia, perhaps the least favored of all South American republics. Established in 1825 by one of Bolívar's generals who wanted a country for himself, it is a curious mixture of regions—tropical jungle, high Andean plateau, semi-tropical lowlands. Though roughly the size of Texas and California combined, it is home to only eight million people, seven million of whom are Indians, mostly Quechua or Aymara.

These contradictions of geography and culture have rendered Bolivia perennially unstable. It is true that, since 1982, the country has enjoyed for the first time in its history a succession of democratically-elected presidents. But only one of these attained office with much more than 20 percent of the vote, which means that the most important event every five years has been not the election of the president but the subsequent horse-trading in congress to select a winner. Virtually the sole currency of Bolivian politics is patronage, with too many contenders struggling for a slice of a very small pie. Meanwhile, issues of relevance to the welfare of the populace—education, health services, roads, and so forth—have been perennially ignored.

For much of Bolivia's history, the principal industry has been mining: silver in the colonial period, tin, wolfram, and other industrial metals thereafter. The mines were located on the high Andean plateau, and the labor force was recruited from Indian communities, first on the basis of a *corvée* and subsequently through cash payments or scrip. Today, by contrast, although the country continues to produce some minerals, the center of economic gravity has shifted to the lowlands as the result of the discovery of huge reserves of oil and natural gas.

In order to exploit these new resources effectively, the government has been compelled to offer incentives to outside investors, and a wide range of foreign enterprises has sunk billions of dollars into the country. The future relationship between the companies and the Bolivian state is, however, not clear, and under the current government it is far from certain with whom, or under what rules, foreign investors will soon be dealing.

Two major developments threaten Bolivia's future. The first is a backlash against the entire political class for its failure to improve the lot of ordinary people—particularly in light of the enormous sums paid by foreign energy companies in the form of royalties amounting to $560 million last year alone. In October 2003, riots in the capital, La Paz, destroyed the headquarters of the political parties supporting the government and forced the president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, to abdicate in favor of his vice-president, Carlos Mesa, and flee the country. The backlash has sent politicians scurrying for external scapegoats—in this case, neighboring Chile and the foreign energy companies themselves.

The quarrel with Chile is of long duration, dating back to the latter's victory in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) and its annexation of Bolivia's outlet to the Pacific. Although successive Chilean governments have offered tax-free docking and storage facilities at Arica, the nearest Pacific port, Bolivia considers unsatisfactory any arrangement

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short of Chile's yielding of full political sovereignty. In the aftermath of the October events, President Mesa decided to shore up his shaky legitimacy by capitalizing on anti-Chile sentiment: he forbade Argentina, a major customer for Bolivian natural gas, to resell the product to Chile. The effect is bound to be devastating to Chile as the only non-tropical country in South America, where winters can often be unusually harsh. Whatever one may think of the president's act, it has won praise from all sectors of Bolivian political life, including the most left-wing.

Meanwhile, the government has turned on the international energy companies, raising doubts as to whether, and under what conditions, it will continue to export natural gas at all. In highland Bolivia, where the poor have failed over the centuries to profit from the extraction of metals, there is considerable sentiment in favor of keeping the natural gas at home, lest Bolivia run out. (By most estimates, the country has enough under the ground to last for centuries to come.) This puts the populous high Andean plateau at some political distance from the tropical lowlands, where many people are beginning to wonder why they should allow La Paz and the highlands to consign them to economic oblivion. In the lowland department of Santa Cruz one hears talk of actual secession, perhaps in conjunction with departments to the immediate north and south.

Mesa and his associates are attempting to purchase national consensus at the expense of the foreign companies. During the first administration of President de Lozada (1992-1997), in exchange for 30-year operating contracts, massive amounts of foreign capital and expertise were attracted to the hydrocarbons sector. Now, however, Mesa has proposed revoking the existing contracts and replacing their graduated tax structure with a flat, 50-percent tax on all oil and gas fields regardless of when and by whom they were first developed. He admits that this would saddle the country with perhaps as much as $4.5 billion in certified claims for breach of contract, but, fearful of a repetition of the October riots, he appears to feel he has no choice. A referendum with five carefully-phrased questions, scheduled for July, is intended to give him the necessary authority.

It remains to be seen whether this referendum will indeed confer upon Bolivia's political class the legitimacy it signally lacks. What is certain is that it will isolate the country from foreign capital and investment for years to come—a terrible fate in a society for which development through domestic savings is a virtual impossibility.

THIS BRINGS us to the second development threatening the country's future. If, in many ways, Bolivia is strangling in the vines of its own history, it is also being buffeted by the winds of new, destructive ideologies imported from Western Europe and the United States.

In recent years, many Indian communities—often egged on and financed by Scandinavian non-governmental organizations, with additional funding from such places as Libya and Chávez's Venezuela—have raised the idea of creating a new republic to be known as Kollasuyo, with Quechua and Aymara as its officially recognized languages. In its most exaggerated form, this Inca nationalism proposes to repeal 400 years of Bolivian history, re-nationalizing everything in sight and cutting the country's tenuous links with the outside world.

It is self-evident that Bolivia's Indian majority has been badly used and neglected for centuries, first by the Spaniards and then by a succession of governments drawn from the "white" and *cholo* (mixed-race) elite. But it is inconceivable that race war or enforced economic isolation will improve the Indians' lot. Quite apart from the catastrophic economic consequences, such an act would separate the highlands both culturally and linguistically from the tropical lowlands where the population is mixed-race and Spanish-speaking, raising serious questions about whether the two halves of the country have enough in common to continue within the same boundaries.

There is an economic dimension to the new identity politics as well. As mining has fallen into decline, the most reliable source of income for many Indians is the cultivation of the coca leaf, which provides the raw material for cocaine. For some years now, successive Bolivian governments have cooperated with the U.S. in efforts to suppress coca cultivation. By way of reaction, this has created a major new political force—the *cocaleros*—and their charismatic leader, Evo Morales, one of four indigenous members of the Bolivian congress, whose party goes under the somewhat inappropriate name of the Movement Toward Socialism.

Morales, a new darling of European socialists, certainly *sounds* radical enough: he favors turning Bolivia into "another Cuba" and hauling President George W. Bush before the World Court for crimes of "economic genocide" and "*lèse-humanité*." But Morales is a moderate compared with his associate Felipe Quispe, another indigenous congressman. As Quispe told me in his La Paz office in late April, "all the white people will have to leave" the new Kollasuyo, and that specifically includes *cholos*.

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Perhaps the best that can be hoped for, then, is a peaceful division of Bolivia in which each successor republic would go its own way—the tropical lowlands as part of the legitimate world economy, the Andean highlands as a component of the illicit drug network and some marginal mining activities. The first of these would stand some chance of becoming a "normal" Latin America country; the other would be transformed into a destination for narco-traffickers and radical foreign tourists. What seems unlikely is that the two halves of an incoherent geographical expression can be permanently held together simply at the behest of outsiders.

IF THERE is one lesson to be learned from the experience of Latin America over the past twenty years, it is that while elections are a necessary condition for democracy, in and of themselves they are insufficient. No doubt this should have been evident from the very beginning, but in fact it was not. The terrible result is that the wretched performance of the elected leadership in much of the region has tarnished the whole notion of democratic governance.

The cases of Venezuela and Bolivia are merely extreme examples. One could cite Peru, where the president's wife, within weeks of her husband's inauguration, was discovered to be receiving $10,000 a month as a "consultant" to a European bank. Or Argentina, where we now know that every one of the ministers in the cabinet of President Carlos Menem (1989-1999) was receiving $50,000 a *month* as an additional, unreported bonus. Or Alfonso Portillo, until recently president of Guatemala, accused of embezzlement and other crimes while in office and now hoping to avoid extradition in Mexico. Dozens if not hundreds of smaller-time politicians are getting away with similar offenses by hiding behind the fiction of parliamentary immunity.*

In short, it is not "neo-liberalism" or the disciplines of the International Monetary Fund that can explain why the citizens of these countries lack adequate services. It is, rather, the tendency of the political classes to treat government service as nothing more than an opportunity to enrich themselves and their immediate families. The obvious contrast is Chile, where a member of congress recently accused of taking a $30,000 bribe caused a national scandal leading to a full court investigation.

To be sure, Chile is one of the few Latin American countries with a truly independent judiciary and a strong respect for the rules of the democratic game. Not coincidentally, it also has one of the most dynamic economies in the region—indeed, in the entire Third World. Chile's neighbors—or, rather, their political classes—fail to connect the dots; perhaps they have their reasons. What is tragic is that the lesson offered by Chile has not made a broader impression on the Latin American public. As long as that is the case, the particular label given to a political regime will remain close to meaningless.

LATIN AMERICANS have a long-seated habit of blaming the United States for everything that goes wrong in their countries, as if they had no responsibility whatsoever for outcomes. As an American diplomat once described this attitude to me, "I've got a problem; what are *you* going to do about it?" During the authoritarian decades, the *fons et origo* of the region's problems was held to be military governments allegedly installed or (as the media coyly preferred) "supported" by the United States. What, then, of governments freely elected by universal suffrage? The region is running out of excuses for its failures.

To be sure, the United States can take little consolation in these developments. Though declining in global economic importance, Latin America is still, for the United States at least, a major market, a major venue of investment, a major source of human capital and labor, and in the case of Mexico and Venezuela a major source of energy. Some countries are uncomfortably close to us geographically. To support the democratic renaissance in the region was the right thing to do—right for the Latins, and right for the United States. But beyond that there is little we can do but wish and hope for a better performance from the emergent political class, and for governments worthier of the people that elect them.

* See Andrés Barreto and Judd Kessler, "Latin Leaders' Escape Hatch," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2004.

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Music

Unloved Elgar

Terry Teachout

In England, Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) is widely regarded as a great composer, one of the key figures of the late Romantic period. Elsewhere, he is known—if at all—for two pieces, the *Enigma Variations*, Op. 36 (1899), and the first of the five *Pomp and Circumstance* marches (1901), whose stately tune continues to be played at graduations and other ceremonial occasions. Except for a brief European vogue in the years just prior to World War I, his other works have never been popular in any other country, least of all the United States, where they are rarely heard.

At first glance, this situation seems barely worthy of comment. The history of music, after all, is full of talented composers whose work resists export. Yet few English critics are willing to relegate Elgar to the same regional pigeonhole as, say, Germany's Max Reger or Denmark's Carl Nielsen. To them he is more like Sergei Rachmaninoff or Richard Strauss, a genius born too late to have fit comfortably into his own time—and one whose music, they point out, was taken up by such acclaimed artists as Pablo Casals, Fritz Kreisler, Yehudi Menuhin, and Arturo Toscanini.

Why, then, has Elgar failed to find favor outside England? Is his music really "untranslatable"? Or might the problem instead be extramusical? Even inside England, after all, there has always been a small but vocal cadre that has objected to Elgar's music for reasons that have little to do with its merits. In 1934, the year of his death, the composer-critic Constant Lambert claimed that "much of [his] music, through no fault of its own, has for the present generation an almost intolerable air of smugness, self-assurance, and autocratic benevolence."

For Englishmen like Lambert, Elgar was the musical counterpart of Rudyard Kipling, an eminent Edwardian who symbolized the social mores and cultural values of a nation in whose righteousness they themselves no longer believed. In fact, however, Elgar and Kipling had surprisingly little in common as artists, save for the extent to which they have both been misunderstood and misrepresented. Far from being smug and self-assured, they were intensely introspective artists who were no strangers to uncertainty. Elgar in particular was so wracked with self-doubt that he wrote no music of importance for the last decade and a half of his life.

As for the music Elgar did write, it rarely if ever conforms to the Colonel-Bogeyish caricatures of his enemies. Beneath its resplendent surfaces, the best of it is high-strung and joltingly febrile—much like the man himself.

The source of Elgar's self-doubt is more easily described than explained. He was an artist who longed to be a gentleman, two things that would never be less compatible than at the time and in the place where he lived.

Elgar was born into England's lower middle class, the son of a provincial piano tuner and shopkeeper. (He was also born Catholic at a time when Protestant bigotry, though considerably diminished, remained a significant force in English social life.) Though his exceptional gifts became evident in early child-

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hood, his father could not afford to give the boy a proper musical education. Instead, he became that rarity of rarities, a self-taught classical composer. Since it was taken for granted that the young Elgar would become a music teacher and instrumentalist, he studied violin on a catch-as-catch-can basis, but he did not go to college or attend a conservatory.

Modern-day readers unaware of the peculiarities of Victorian England's classical-music culture are unlikely to appreciate Elgar's situation. Then, as now, it was impossible for a classical musician to earn a living solely by composing. The English musical establishment was dominated by "gentleman composers" with university degrees who taught on the conservatory level; full-time professional performers, by contrast, were comparable in status to tradesmen, essential but not respectable. The result was an amateur culture that had produced neither any world-class composers (the last one, Henry Purcell, had died in 1695) nor any native-born soloists or conductors of the first rank.

Had Elgar been a different sort of man, he might have responded to these obstacles in a different, more insouciant way—as, for instance, did George Bernard Shaw, an admirer with whom he became friendly in later life. But unlike Shaw, Elgar believed that the world owed him both a living and a social position consistent with his talent, and he comported himself accordingly. In 1889 he married Alice Roberts, an upper-middle-class pupil whose small private income made it easier for him to pursue a career in music. By small steps he established himself as a composer of promise, and in 1899 his *Enigma Variations*, a suite of sharply drawn character pieces based on the personalities of a dozen of his friends, was successfully premiered in London by the celebrated German conductor Hans Richter.

A year later, Richter led the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, a powerfully dramatic setting for soloists, chorus, and orchestra of a poem by Cardinal Newman that tells the story of a dying man's encounter with God. Though the ill-prepared premiere was a calamitous failure, *Gerontius*, like the *Enigma Variations* before it, was soon recognized as a work of real substance, and Elgar followed it up in 1901 with the first *Pomp and Circumstance* march, which became an immediate and resounding popular success. He was knighted in 1904, and for the rest of his life was generally considered to be England's outstanding composer.

But worldly success had come too late and after too hard a struggle for him to feel secure in his own skin, and though he eventually transformed himself into the very model of a perfect English gentleman, those who knew him best knew better. As late as 1897 he brusquely declined an invitation to an upper-class luncheon party, informing the hostess by note that she "would not wish [her] board to be disgraced by the presence of a piano-tuner's son and his wife." Although he would grow more socially assured, his private correspondence was always to be stained with the high whine of self-pity, and never more so than in the letter he sent to an intimate friend after the unsuccessful premiere of *Gerontius*:

> As far as I'm concerned music in England is dead. . . . I have worked hard for forty years & at the last, Providence denies me a decent hearing of my work: so I submit—I always said God was against art and I still believe it.

Elgar's music is as self-contradictory as was his personality—though vastly more attractive.

Brahms and Wagner were the predominant influences on English classical music in the late 19th century, and Elgar's most ambitious works, *Gerontius* and the two symphonies (Op. 55, 1908, and Op. 63, 1911) and two concertos (for violin, Op. 61, 1910, and for cello, Op. 85, 1919), might be considered an attempt to synthesize the styles of those composers. Like Wagner, Elgar used the modern symphony orchestra as his primary mode of expression, writing works whose elaborate scoring and chromatically enriched harmonic vocabulary broke with the Mendelssohnian idiom of his predecessors. Like Brahms, he had little interest in or gift for opera, and his symphonic works contain no trace of the unabashed eroticism that was central to Wagner's musical identity, just as his lyricism is more nostalgic than ardent. Borrowing a phrase from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, he himself described his lyric style as "smiling with a sigh."

On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that Elgar's music is by no means as beholden to the Austro-German tradition as this description suggests. The comparative isolation in which he had developed forced him to cultivate and trust his own taste, and for all the Wagnerism of *Gerontius*, he was closer in spirit to Dvořák and Schumann—as well as to such contemporary French composers as Léo Delibes and Jules Massenet, whose elegant scoring he admired and emulated.* Nor did he aspire to Brahms's architectural rigor: his symphonic works are far more loosely knit, on occasion to the point of outright diffuseness.

In addition, Elgar had a popular touch for which he never saw any need to apologize. No "gentleman composer" would have (or could have) written the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, or the Dickensian *Cockaigne (In London Town)*, Op. 40, a 1901 concert overture that he described as "honest, healthy, humorous and strong but not vulgar." Not that he disdained vulgarity:

> Vulgarity often goes with inventiveness, and it can take the place of initiative—in a rude and misguided way, no doubt—but after all it does something, and can be

* Throughout his career Elgar would also turn out engaging salon-type miniatures such as *Salut d'amour* (1888), whose melodic charm is unmistakably French in tone, just as the *Enigma Variations* are more like a small-scale ballet score than a conventional set of variations on a theme.

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> and has been refined. . . . I know that there are a lot of people who like to celebrate events with music. To these people I have given tunes. Is that wrong?

Above all, Elgar was a man in the grip of his own ever-churning emotions. "English music is white and evades everything," he wrote. Not so his own music, which mirrored the manic-depressive swings of his temperament as precisely as a fever chart. Within the span of a single piece—even a single movement—he darts from exultation to despair and back again. Nowhere is this volatility more evident than in the Second Symphony, whose Straussian opulence and thrust are colored by a disturbing chromatic ambiguity suggestive of the anguish that was never far from Elgar's mind.

The Second Symphony is the cornerstone of a small but significant group of works in which Elgar succeeded in fully reconciling the seemingly inconsistent aspects of his style. Together with *Gerontius*, the warmly expansive Violin Concerto, the sublime Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet and String Orchestra, Op. 47 (1905), and *Falstaff*, Op. 68 (1913), a "symphonic study" in which Shakespeare's "fat knight" is portrayed with the incisive immediacy of a well-staged production of *Henry IV*, it fulfills the promise that Bernard Shaw had felt when he first heard the *Enigma Variations*: "I sat up and said 'Whew!' I knew we had got it at last."

But Elgar was too unstable to remain in full command of his talent for very long. Like so many Englishmen of his generation, he was shaken to the core by World War I, and his inspiration began to falter. He pulled himself together to complete one final masterpiece, the Cello Concerto of 1919. Shorter and more concentrated than the other key works of his maturity, it is a dark elegy for the lost world of his youth.

Five months after the concerto's premiere, Elgar's wife died, and the resulting psychic devastation, as can be seen from his correspondence, was complete:

> There is no work left for me to do: my active creative period began under the most tender care and it ended with that care. . . . I hear nothing of anyone & do not write at all—in fact I have "gone out"—& like it.

Elgar lived on for fourteen more years, but he composed no new music, though he did finish a number of smaller works based on existing sketches. Instead, he retreated into himself, raising dogs, attending horse races, and pretending to have lost all interest in the art that had long been at the center of his existence. At the same time, he fell from favor with a new generation of musicians shaped by modernism and uninterested in a man whom they identified with an age they longed to put behind them.

Ironically, Elgar's only continuing contact with the world of music was made possible by his interest in that most modern of technologies, the phonograph. An inspired conductor of his own works, he had begun making records as early as 1914. Between then and his death twenty years later, he recorded virtually all of his orchestral compositions in uniquely vivid interpretations whose nervous energy and rhythmic flexibility remain compelling to this day.*

Elgar's recordings helped stimulate interest in his music, and the critical eclipse of the 20's gave way to a revival that brightened his old age. Not only did he begin preliminary work on an opera based on Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, but the BBC, encouraged by Shaw, commissioned him to write a Third Symphony. Unfortunately, the onset of cancer made it impossible for him to do more than sketch the symphony in sufficient detail to give a few semi-improvised private performances at the piano.† He made his final recordings in August of 1933 and died the following February.

NO ONE has ever satisfactorily explained the failure of Elgar's music to win an international audience. It is true that he long outlived his day, but so did Strauss and Rachmaninoff, both of whom are still popular in spite of (if not because of) their problematic relationship to modernity. And while it is tempting to suggest that Elgar's large-scale works are too emotionally ambivalent ever to appeal to a mass audience, much the same could be said of the music of Gustav Mahler, his close contemporary, which long ago found its way into the standard repertoire.

My own guess is that Elgar awaits a generation of charismatic young performers who will do for him what Leonard Bernstein did for Mahler in the 60's. It has long seemed to me that his best music is ripe for revival, not least because of its individuality. "I hold nothing back," he said, and it was the truth. All that he thought and felt went into his compositions, which are so unguarded at times as to make the reticent listener squirm.

The staunch classicist, of course, will never feel at home with Elgar's emotional extremism, much less his lack of structural rigor. As Michael Kennedy, his shrewdest critic, recently pointed out, Elgar was "a private man, deeply divided against himself . . . his personality at once the prey of insecurity and depression and the onrush of sudden high spirits." Such men do not make easy friends, or create easy art. And therein lies the paradox of Edward Elgar, whose impassioned, intemperate music could not be more at odds with its dignified reputation.

But that is also why I have no doubt that his time, like Mahler's, will come. He is a puzzle waiting to be solved.

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* Several of Elgar's recordings are now available on CD and are listed, along with other noteworthy recorded performances of his music, in the discography at the end of this article.

† Elgar requested on his deathbed that no one be permitted to "complete" these fragmentary sketches, but in 1998 Anthony Payne used them as the basis for a conjectural version of the Third Symphony that has since been recorded and widely performed.

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Elgar on CD: A Select Discography

Even though all of Elgar's music has been recorded, much of it by the composer himself, many important performances (most notably Arturo Toscanini's versions of the *Enigma Variations* with the BBC and NBC Symphonies) are out of print. Fortunately, first-class recordings of the major works remain available on CD. Here are ten of the best:

1931-32: Elgar's recording with the London Symphony of *Falstaff*, in which fluctuating rubato and forward momentum are combined to uncanny effect, is perhaps his most illuminating interpretation. No other recorded performance is nearly as effective. Coupled on CD with an equally fine First Symphony, it is available as an import in well-stocked American record stores or can be ordered directly from England via www.amazon.co.uk (EMI 5 67296-2).

1932: When the aging Fritz Kreisler opted not to record the technically demanding Violin Concerto with Elgar, the producer Fred Gaisberg replaced him with the sixteen-year-old Yehudi Menuhin, who had never before played the work. The result was a definitive version, sympathetically accompanied by the London Symphony, that has never been out of print since its original release. On CD it is coupled with Elgar's dim-sounding but fascinating 1926 recording of the *Enigma Variations* (EMI 5 66979-2).

1945: Pablo Casals's performances of the Cello Concerto often received bad notices in England—but never from Elgar, who loved the Spaniard's unabashed romanticism. Had he lived to hear Casals's bold recording with Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony, he would no doubt have found it much to his liking (EMI 7 63498-2).

1958: Unlike Elgar's other pieces for orchestra, the *Enigma Variations* has been recorded by many non-English conductors. In his superlative version with the London Symphony, Pierre Monteux, a French conductor equally at home in German music, is particularly responsive to Elgar's delicate, transparent orchestral palette (London 452 303-2).

1962: Sir John Barbirolli, who as a young man played in the cello section for the premiere of Elgar's Cello Concerto, was a red-blooded but wayward conductor whose flexibility of tempo sometimes caused his interpretations of Elgar's music to sound invertebrate. Not so his thrilling stereo recording with the Sinfonia of London of the Introduction and Allegro, a performance of surging momentum and—when appropriate—piercing nostalgia (EMI Classics 5 67264-2).

1963/1966: A Cockney by birth, Barbirolli was no less pleasing a performer of the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches and *Cockaigne* Overture, which he recorded with the Philharmonia Orchestra in vigorous, virile performances (EMI 5 67296-2).

1971: In addition to being a great composer, Benjamin Britten was also one of the finest conductors of the 20th century, and his recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*, made after a series of live performances at the Aldeburgh Festival, has a revelatory directness that recalls the excerpts from *Gerontius* recorded by Elgar in concert a half-century earlier. Though Peter Pears's highly personal singing as Gerontius is not to all tastes, I find it totally involving, and the soprano Yvonne Minton, the baritone John Shirley-Quirk, the choir of King's College, Cambridge, and the London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra are equally excellent. Like Elgar's *Falstaff*, this performance is currently out of print in the U.S. but can be ordered from www.amazon.co.uk (Double Decca 448 170-2, two CD's).

More conventional in style but nearly as satisfying in overall effect is Malcolm Sargent's 1945 recording, which features the Huddersfield Choral Society, the Liverpool Philharmonic, and the tenor Heddle Nash as Gerontius (Pearl GEMS 0128, two CD's).

1975-76: Adrian Boult was more closely identified with Elgar's music than any other conductor, and his last recording of the Second Symphony with the London Philharmonic, while less exciting than his out-of-print 1944 performance with the BBC Symphony, is warm and expansive without lapsing into Barbirolli-like shapelessness (EMI 7 64014-2).

1997: A number of young soloists and ensembles have taken up Elgar's cause in recent years; the Maggini Quartet's recording of the E Minor String Quartet, Op. 83, has an uncomplicated freshness that I find thoroughly sympathetic (Naxos 8.553737).

These CD's can all be purchased online by viewing this article during July and August on Commentary's website:
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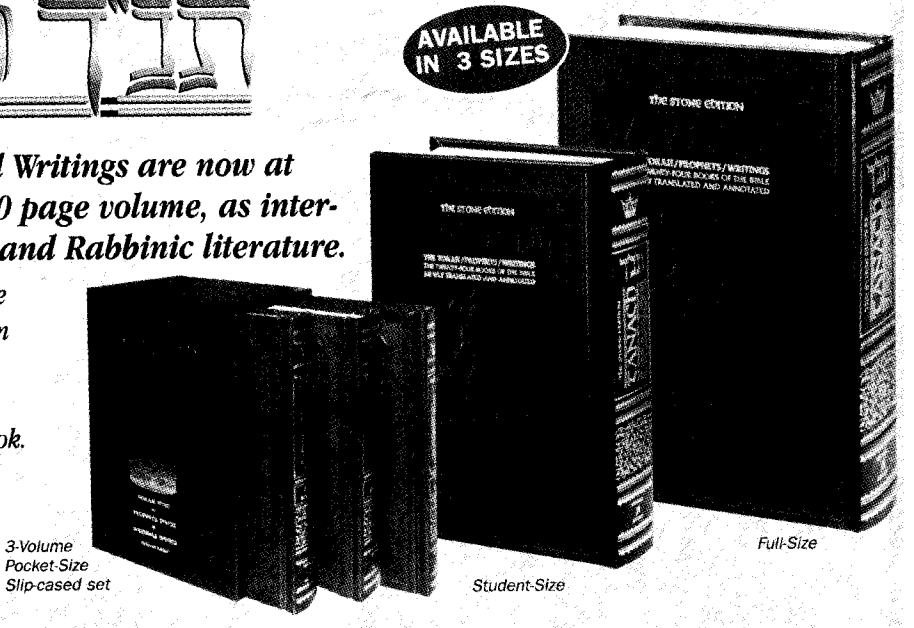

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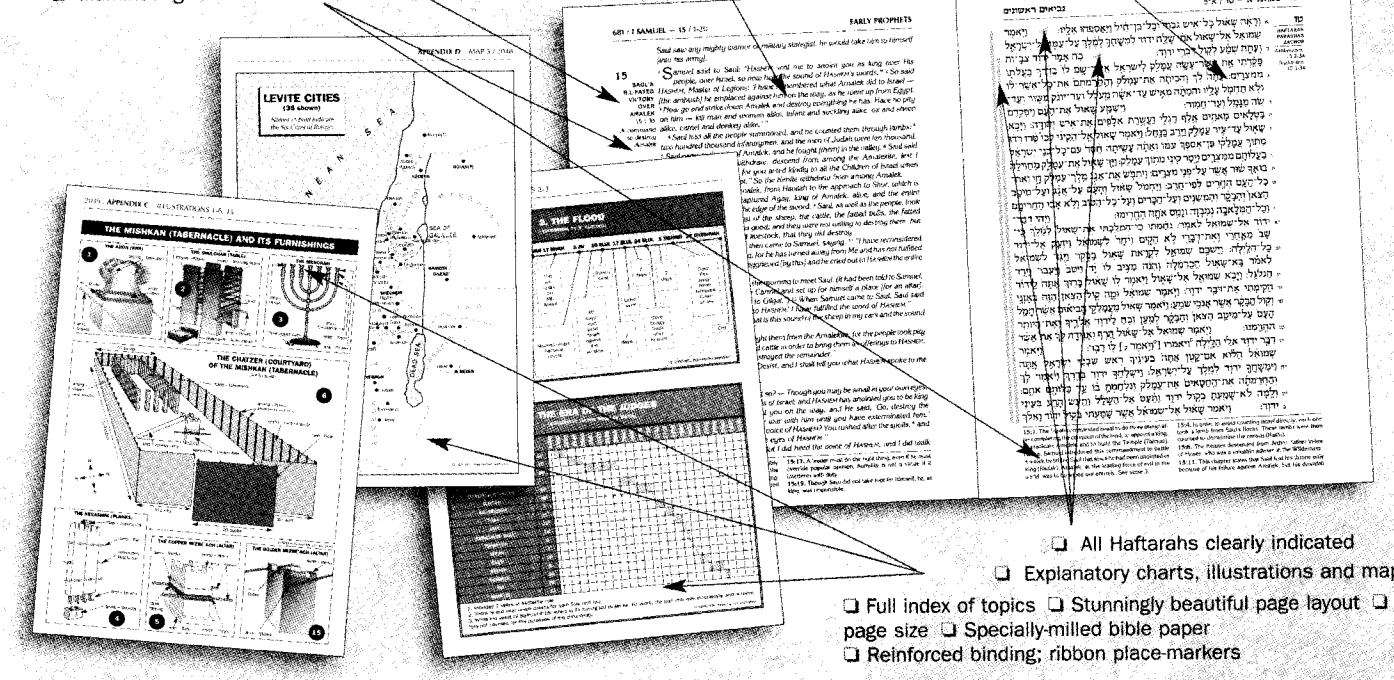

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Books in Review

Out of Order

State-Building:
Governance and World
Order in the 21st Century
by Francis Fukuyama
Cornell. 137 pp. $22.50

Reviewed by
Max Boot

FEW SUBJECTS in American foreign policy today are more important or contentious than "nation-building." The idea that the U.S. should prop up failed states first came to the forefront of public debate during the Clinton administration, which inherited George H.W. Bush's foray into Somalia, sent troops to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Haiti, and supported an Australian-led occupation of East Timor. These interventions were viewed with great suspicion by many conservative isolationists and realpolitikers, who denounced what Michael Mandelbaum called "foreign policy as social work."

George W. Bush belonged to this camp of doubters. But that was before 9/11. Having spoken disdainfully of nation-building during the 2000 campaign, he has embarked on one of the most ambitious such experiments in our history. No matter how the occupation of Iraq ultimately turns out, the problems encountered by the U.S. during the past year are likely to sour many Americans on the whole idea of nation-building. Indeed, many conservatives now seem to be coming full circle, reverting to views they held during the Clinton years after having only reluctantly endorsed President Bush's apparent change of heart on the issue.

But anyone tempted by today's headlines to jump to hasty conclusions about nation-building would be well advised to read Francis Fukuyama's new book. A professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, Fukuyama has become one of the most important social scientists in America during the past decade by tackling the thorniest public-policy questions with great verve and erudition. He has now turned his penetrating intelligence to the problem of nation-building or, as he more accurately calls it, "state-building."

FOR THE past generation, Fukuyama writes, "the dominant trend in world politics" has been "the critique of 'big government' and the attempt to move activities from the state sector to private markets or civil society." This loosening of state controls has been a great boon to the industrialized countries. In the developing world, however, the chief barrier to progress has been not heavy-handed government but rather "weak, incompetent, or nonexisting government." Failed states, Fukuyama observes, "are the source of many of the world's most serious problems, from poverty to AIDS to drugs to terrorism."

It is not that these states lack for ambition. Many of them have, as Fukuyama puts it, great "scope" but little "strength": that is, they claim to provide everything from free health care to universal employment

MAX BOOT *is a senior fellow in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, a weekly columnist for the* Los Angeles Times, *and a contributing editor of the* Weekly Standard.

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but in reality cannot perform even such basic tasks as collecting taxes and hauling away garbage. The big mistake of development experts in the 1990's, he argues, was trying to prune back such overgrown states while ignoring the need to strengthen their core functions.

Fukuyama's prime example is Russia, where Western advisers focused on the rapid privatization of state assets without first making sure that the rule of law had been established. The corrupt oligarchy that resulted has turned many Russians against liberal democracy. A similar failure, caused by "the absence of adequate regulatory institutions," contributed to the Asian financial meltdown in 1997-98. Severe as the repercussions of these mistakes were, they pale by comparison with the West's indifference to state-building in Afghanistan during the 1990's—a failure that led directly to the attacks of 9/11.

WHAT DO we know about how to build sound governments? Fukuyama's answer, in a nutshell, is: not a lot. The institutions of successful countries like Denmark or the United States are not hard to replicate on paper. But how can they be made to work in places like Iraq or Afghanistan?

Systems of governance are difficult to transfer, Fukuyama observes, because they always include a large cultural component. One has only to imagine what would have happened if a clone of the Japanese Ministry of Trade and Industry had been transplanted to Pakistan or Brazil after World War II. Would those countries have matched Japan's rate of growth? Of course not. They lack many of the intangible cultural assets—social cohesion, a tradition of honest civil servants—that enabled Japan's extraordinary economic rise.

Western countries have tried to force-feed good government to developing countries by imposing conditions on their financial aid, like lower taxes and budget deficits. But this seldom works, Fukuyama contends, both because of entrenched resistance from local elites and because of the unwillingness of donors to cut off the poorest countries from all assistance when they do not meet their obligations.

A blunter approach to getting failed states to shape up is military occupation. In places ranging from East Timor to Bosnia, the international community has increasingly resorted to reform-at-gunpoint. Such interventions have been successful in alleviating immediate problems like starvation and ethnic cleansing, but not in creating liberal institutions that can survive the pullout of foreign troops.

What, then, of imperialism? Alas, writes Fukuyama, in only "a depressingly small handful" of places—mainly former British dominions like India, Singapore, and Hong Kong—has it left a positive and enduring legacy. U.S. interventions, by contrast, have done little to promote reform, in Latin America or elsewhere. The two most frequently cited success stories, Germany and Japan, do not count in Fukuyama's view, since both were "very strong bureaucratic states long before the United States defeated them."

State-Building began as a series of lectures at Cornell University, and Fukuyama spends much of it reviewing what the scholarly community knows—and does not know—about how to create successful states. This does not make for especially provocative reading, but what the book lacks in shock value, it more than makes up for with common sense and sound research.

Those who believe that the U.S. should not be in the business of nation-building will find some support in Fukuyama's book—but also plenty of rebuttal. For all of his doubts about our capacity to build better states in the developing world, he understands that, given the magnitude of the threats we face, we cannot abandon the effort. It is not a very galvanizing conclusion, but it is an accurate one.

Oddly enough, however, Fukuyama does not address the most burning question of the moment regarding state-building: whether the U.S. should try to install a democracy in Iraq or settle for some kind of strongman or even a three-state solution. More broadly, he does not take a position in the debate between "neoconservatives" who believe in promoting democracy abroad and "realists" who think that dictators committed to the rule of law are a better bet. While noting that "authoritarian countries . . . have long-term problems with legitimacy," he essentially throws up his hands and declares that "the empirical relationship between democracy and development remains complex and ambiguous."

By not addressing this point, Fukuyama neglects an important normative dimension of his subject. Should the goal of state-building simply be a strong state or should it be a strong *liberal-democratic* state? The answer one gives to this question is crucial, since it dictates how much emphasis to place on promoting individual liberties as opposed to enhancing the power and efficiency of the state. Fukuyama does not consider the obvious trade-offs.

Indeed, in this slim volume, Fukuyama is uncharacteristically reluctant to take strong positions, refusing even to say whether he supported the intervention in Iraq: "The pros and cons of that case," he writes, "were very complex." Nor does he offer much by way of practical solutions (as he did recently in a valuable article in the *Atlantic*). Fukuyama does offer, however, fresh ways to think about this vitally important, if awfully vexing, subject. Policy-makers would be well advised to read this book and ponder its many lessons.

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Good Breeding

Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement
by Christine Rosen
Oxford. 296 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Kevin Shapiro

Charles Darwin was a sickly man whose letters reveal much anguish over the "infirmity" he feared he had passed on to his offspring. Two of his children died young, and the others were in chronically failing health. In this spectacle of illness and death, Darwin saw the hand of nature: the constitutionally weak might perish, but the vigorous and healthy would survive to enjoy life. Though he suspected that inbreeding was a culprit, he doubted anything could be done about it, lamenting to a friend, "What a book a Devil's Chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low & horridly cruel works of nature!"

If Darwin was a cynic, his young cousin Francis Galton was decidedly more optimistic. A polymath and a pioneer of modern statistical analysis, Galton imagined that human beings could wrest control of their hereditary destiny by practicing what he called eugenics—that is, encouraging the reproduction of the fit, and preventing that of the feeble and degenerate. "What nature does blindly, slowly, ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly," he wrote with almost religious inspiration. Galton saw eugenics not as a devil's chapbook, but as a catechism for a new kind of faith: faith in the perfectibility of mankind through provident breeding.

In *Preaching Eugenics*, Christine Rosen documents the spread of Galton's evangel through the churches and religious institutions of the United States in the early part of the 20th century. In many ways Darwin's work had prepared the ground. Confronted with the scientific "fact" of evolution, many clergymen felt an acute sense of status anxiety over their role as purveyors of spiritual truth. Traditionalists and conservatives among them took refuge in the reaffirmation of biblical infallibility; for liberal religious leaders, however, the challenge was to embrace the new sciences and embark on a program of social reform—or else face irrelevance.

The initial impetus, as Rosen tells it, came from amateur sociologists like the Rev. Oscar McCulloch, who in the late 1870's detailed the history of a destitute Indiana clan called

Kevin Shapiro *is a researcher in neuroscience at Harvard.*

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A Girl's Journey through Nazi Europe

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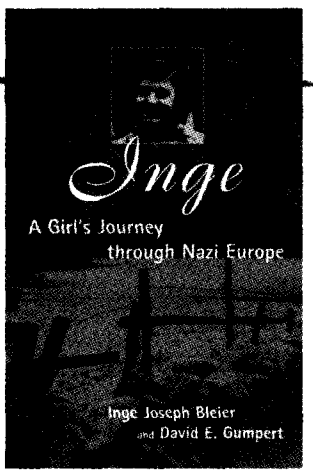

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the Ishmaelites. Among this family, McCulloch was shocked to discover generations of murderers, illegitimate children, prostitutes, polygamists, and beggars. Similarly appalling reports appeared over the next several decades: about the Jukes of New York, the Kallikaks and the Pineys of New Jersey. It seemed that traditional forms of therapy—in particular, the "unlimited public and private aid" dispensed to debauched families like these—only encouraged "the propagation of similarly disposed children."

To attack the problem at its root, McCulloch conceived a new kind of scientific charity with eugenics as its cornerstone. Although he achieved some success in implementing his ideas, it was not until the early 1900's that hereditarian thinking gained wide currency among the Christian clergy. Indeed, eugenics became a key precept of the Social Gospel, the reformist Christian movement of that era. Embracing Galton's science with fervor, religious leaders of all tendencies incorporated eugenics into a broad program aimed at eliminating poverty and rooting out moral degeneracy.

By about 1910, ministers across the United States were pressing for purity reforms, promoting marriage counseling, and giving eugenic child-rearing advice. More coercive tactics were also adopted. Walter Taylor Sumner, dean of Chicago's Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul and a disciple of the feminist social reformer Jane Addams, decreed in 1912 that he would marry no couple without a "certificate of health" from a reputable physician. As churches and synagogues across the country followed suit, a number of states began to enshrine marriage certification in law. Meanwhile, other eugenically-minded social reformers pressed for laws mandating the sterilization of criminals and the segregation of the "feebleminded" into colonies cut off from the rest of society.

For several decades, efforts like these met with considerable success. The enthusiasm of religious leaders for race improvement culminated in the 1920's with the establishment of the American Eugenics Society, an organization that explicitly compared its task with the "founding and development of Christianity." As membership grew more than tenfold in its first decade, the society published a *Eugenics Catechism* extolling the mystical virtues of the human germplasm and downplaying the unpleasant aspects of negative plans like sterilization.

By the mid-1930's, however, the eugenics movement had begun to fall into disrepute. Secular eugenicists came under increasing attack from geneticists, who were seen as having greater scientific credibility, and the rigors of the Depression cut into popular and financial support for eugenic schemes. Catholic clergymen involved in the eugenics movement withdrew in 1930 after Pope Pius XI issued *Casti Connubi*, which condemned, along with birth control, the eugenic regulation of marriage. As ministers confronted economic hardship at home and looming war in Europe, the era of the Social Gospel drew to an end, and with it religious support for the eugenics movement.

CLEAR, CONCISE, and meticulous in its scholarship, *Preaching Eugenics* presents some challenges for the lay reader. The chapters are organized thematically rather than chronologically, making it difficult to follow the timeline of a movement that had a rise, a plateau, and a decline. In focusing largely on the role of religious leaders in the rise of eugenics, moreover, Rosen offers only a fragmentary view of the movement's other arms: the social and the scientific. She also assumes in the reader a certain familiarity with the social milieu of the early 20th century, dotting her text with semi-obscure references to institutions like settlement houses and Chautauqua tents.

Nonetheless, what stands out from this history is the stark truth that eugenics in this country was a *cause célèbre* not of fascists and hatemongers but of a circle that understood itself to comprise the enlightened, the forward-thinking, the best people in the best churches. It was part and parcel of a progressive social program that included temperance, women's suffrage, labor reforms, the living wage, and birth control. And it was preached from pulpits across the country and exercised broad ecumenical and inter-religious appeal: when the American Eugenics Society sponsored biennial sermon contests in the late 1920's, entries flooded in from Protestant preachers of various denominations as well as from Reform rabbis and Catholic priests.

Ironically enough, it was the op-

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ponents of eugenics, particularly religious fundamentalists, who were derided as ignorant, superstitious, and unscientific. When eugenic legislation was proposed, it was the Roman Catholic Church that mounted the staunchest defense of individual liberty, citing the supremacy of the natural right to marry and procreate over the state's interest in promoting racial fitness.

The involvement of Jewish religious leaders in the eugenics movement, though relatively minor in scope, also has its ironic twists. Reform rabbis like Max Reichler and Emil Hirsch saw in eugenics a refinement of the talmudic laws governing marriage and child-rearing. Others, like Stephen S. Wise, regarded eugenic science as a means of "healing" the world—in other words, as a vehicle of social reform. A number of Reform rabbis remained enthusiastic proponents of the movement even as it exhibited its darker side in the form of academic eugenicists convinced of the supposedly hereditary cunning and shrewdness of Jews, or fretting publicly over their "high survival rate."

If eugenics as a social movement in the United States was already moribund in the late 1930's, by the 1950's it was totally extinguished, the taint of Nazism having cast hereditarian thinking in a permanently disreputable light. Social scientists in the second half of the 20th century came to eschew biological explanations for human behavior, instead regarding the environment as all-determining. Though this reflex has itself gradually weakened, it seems safe to say that no respectable biologist these days would dare speculate about a gene for feeblemindedness or moral turpitude.

In this light, it might be tempting to regard eugenics as a vaguely sinister pseudoscience, like phrenology or Lysenkoism. But in at least one respect, that would be a serious mistake. Although the eugenics movement of the 1910's and 20's was replete with unsavory assumptions—not to mention bizarre and dubious theories—the reformers who embraced eugenics with such zeal had only a superficial interest in the supposed details of the science. As Rosen points out, their aim was rather more pragmatic: namely, to cure the hereditary ills of society by promoting physical and psychological fitness.

The eugenic methods of the last century failed to achieve this goal, but the reproductive biotechnologies of the present century may yet succeed. After all, unlike the eugenicists, who lacked a sophisticat-

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ed understanding of genetics and could only speculate about the heritability of various traits, modern geneticists possess a more formidable armamentarium, including the complete (if not yet completely decoded) sequence of the human genome.

Religious and secular thinkers alike have begun to grapple with the issues posed by recent advances in genetics, exploring the theological and ethical implications of technologies like gene therapy, preimplantation genetic diagnosis, and reproductive cloning. Given the enormous influence religion continues to wield in American life, the response of churches and synagogues will no doubt help to shape the debate. Will religious leaders in the 21st century embrace the new genetic techniques rather than risk appearing intransigent and irrelevant? Or will they stake out principled stands on theological grounds? The science may be new, but *Preaching Eugenics* reminds us that in an important sense, we have been there before.

Bushido Ball

The Meaning of Ichiro: The New Wave from Japan and the Transformation of Our National Pastime
by Robert Whiting
Warner Books. 272 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Stephen Barbara

THE SUBTITLE of this book conveys the provocative suggestion that Japanese players are taking over American baseball and, in so doing, just possibly bringing about its demise. But there is no need for alarm. Having lived in Japan for decades, Robert Whiting does display an unmistakable preference for both Japanese baseball and Japanese culture. Like the snobbish prep-school boy Carl Luce in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Whiting "simply happens to find Eastern philosophy more satisfactory than Western." But his main message to American baseball fans is that it is time to pay notice to the Japanese game, and that message is well worth heeding.

Since 1995, almost two dozen Japanese have made their mark in the major leagues, and many more will surely follow. To explain how this has come about, Whiting undertakes both a history of Japanese baseball and an explanation of the unique philosophy behind it, born (he says) of Japan's group-oriented culture. He also sets out to explore the consequences—the "meaning"— of the new wave of players, and to shed light on their lives and careers. All these topics are hung on the peg of the dazzling outfielder Ichiro Suzuki, now of the Seattle Mariners, who for Whiting as for millions of American fans is the preeminent symbol of the Japanese game.

ICHIRO SUZUKI was born in the industrial city of Nagoya. Raised chiefly by his father, a strict Buddhist and passionate baseball fan, the young Ichiro by his own count spent no more than five or six hours a *year* hanging out with his friends. Instead, his life was devoted to baseball, and this devotion paid off. In his three-year career at Meiden high school (a kind of baseball academy), he batted a sensational .502, striking out only ten times in 536 times at bat. After being drafted into Japan's professional league, the NPB, he maintained this superb form, winning seven straight batting titles and earning the title "*kaibutsu*"—monster—from the Japanese press.

Ever since the mid-1990's, when he destroyed the top American major-league pitchers Randy Johnson and Pedro Martinez in a series of

STEPHEN BARBARA *is a writer living in Hoboken, New Jersey.*

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exhibition matches, Ichiro had dreamed of playing in the U.S. In 2001, his wish was fulfilled. Although critics thought him too small for the American game, Ichiro rapidly proved them wrong. In his first year with the Mariners he was named Rookie of the Year and earned the American League's MVP (most valuable player) award, hitting .350 and nearly toppling George Sisler's record for the number of hits in a single season.

As Whiting notes, not only did Ichiro inspire the Mariners to achieve their best season ever, he also set off a veritable fever of Ichiro mania in Seattle. With stadium attendance skyrocketing, and Ichiro merchandise selling hand over fist, the wiry, impassive player became a hero to local fans—especially youngsters—who marveled at his deft base-running skills and exotic batting stance. Most important of all, perhaps, Ichiro prompted a change in his team's playing style, transforming a group of lackadaisical sluggers into a scrappy and effective outfit.

For Whiting, it is hardly insignificant that Ichiro's extraordinary rise to the top was fueled by something other than demonic ambition: namely, the steady, quiet dedication of a purist. Ichiro never celebrated a home run or a key hit by raising a pumped fist, never shed a tear or broke a bat after a bad night or otherwise loudly betrayed his emotions. In interviews with the press, he was restrained to the point of surliness. A typical response to a reporter's question might run: "I'm working toward my own inner goals. As for what those goals are, I can't tell you."

Ichiro's rise from homegrown star to major-league MVP is, for Whiting, a natural entry point to an exploration of broad cultural differences. Baseball, he writes, was brought to Japan by American missionaries during the relatively liberal era of the Meiji. At first, the game was admired for its quality of openness—the same quality many Japanese of the time associated with the West in general. Later on, however, and especially with the shift of political winds, it became transformed into a kind of home-style martial art, acquiring a strong emphasis on traditional virtues like developing stamina, improving *konjo* (fighting spirit), and perfecting orthodox form. Whiting calls this version of the game "*bushido* ball," after Japan's samurai code; it quickly became wildly popular, a sporting illustration of the doctrine that, with hard work and reliance on tradition, Japan could challenge Westerners at their own game.

Making little secret of where his own preferences lie, Whiting crisply summarizes the differences between the American and Japanese styles of baseball. Whereas American players enjoy leisurely practice schedules that allow much time for rest and recuperation, Japanese players train year-round, enduring harsh winters and endless drills. If American ballplayers stand on an almost equal footing with their coaches, deference to authority is key in Japan, where a coach may slap a player in the face for a bad performance. Americans play a loose, aggressive, free-swinging game in which the home run and clutch hit are all-important and the clubhouse philosophy is "whatever it takes to win"; Japanese, by contrast, play "small ball," a style emphasizing bunting, stealing, sacrifice hitting, and team harmony ("*wa*").

Given this state of affairs, it is no wonder that clashes have occurred as Japanese players have entered the American major leagues. Ichiro, for one, though amenable to the comparatively free style of American baseball, has tended at times to regard his teammates like a wealthy man looking down at a parvenu. "Theirs was the practice that made you wonder whether they could really play the game or not," he once

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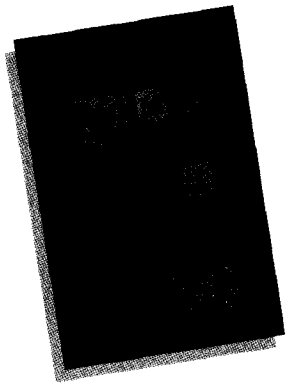

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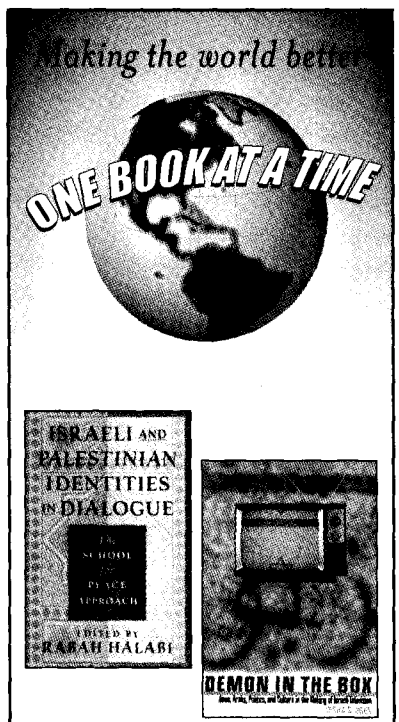

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said. He was also shocked by the way the Americans treated equipment: "I couldn't understand how my teammates could sit down on a glove I'd just cleaned and placed on the bench. . . . Cleaning the glove cleans the heart. It's all part of a 24-hour process."

The same sort of thing happens in mirror-image form when American players go to Japan to join the NPB. In one incident reported by Whiting, Darryl May, an American pitcher not known for his tranquil temper, left team practice early one day complaining of a sore thigh. Stormed by caviling Japanese reporters who wondered if the soreness might be a fabrication, May spat on a photographer's camera and unleashed a flurry of *fakku* words, luridly featured in the next day's papers.

ANECDOTES LIKE these pepper *The Meaning of Ichiro*, lending credibility to Whiting's rather broadly drawn contrasts. Still, the question remains: *has* the entry of Ichiro and his Japanese cohorts "transformed" the American game, as the subtitle insists?

On this crucial point, Whiting's enthusiasm for Japanese baseball seems to have gotten the better of him. In his racy, colorful style, he vividly conveys how not just Ichiro but other players like Hideki Matsui and Hideo Nomo have turned major-league baseball into a truly international enterprise. But with the exception of Ichiro's unusually impressive 2001 season, the facts do not suggest anything like a transformation.

By early June of this year, Japanese players considered as a whole were doing respectably but hardly dazzlingly. Ichiro was way ahead of the others, batting .338 and leading the American League in hits (76); Hideki Matsui, the Yankees slugger, stood at .320 with nine home runs; and the Dodgers pitcher Hideo Nomo had a disappointing earned-run average of 7.13 and a win-loss record of 3-5. Meanwhile, Barry Bonds, an exemplar of our easy-going, free-ranging American game, was batting a powerful .365 with fourteen home runs; Scott Rolen was hitting .348 with thirteen home runs and a league-leading 53 runs batted in; and Manny Ramirez, an even looser and more aggressive player than Bonds, stood at .356 with fourteen home runs and 39 runs batted in.

By such measures, the American style of baseball is alive and well. Indeed, if a transformation is going on, one might be equally tempted to propose that it is running in the other direction: Japan's players are coming to America and learning to play our game, our way. It would require another, subtler book to explain whether that is for better or for worse, or something in between.

Keeping Faith?

Double or Nothing?
Jewish Families
and Mixed Marriage
by Sylvia Barack Fishman
Brandeis. 196 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Saul Singer

FOR MORE than a decade, the American Jewish community has been preoccupied with what has come to be known as the "continuity crisis"—that is, the question of whether Jews in the U.S. are perpetuating themselves and their traditions. The precipitating event for these communal worries was the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), which found that

SAUL SINGER, *a new contributor, is the author of* Confronting Jihad: Israel's Struggle and the World After 9/11 *and is a columnist for and the editorial-page editor of the* Jerusalem Post.

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about half of American Jews were now marrying non-Jews, defying a taboo that (along with anti-Semitic prejudice) had helped ensure for generations that American Jewish parents could look forward to having Jewish grandchildren.

True, not every segment of the Jewish community has seen this unprecedented rate of intermarriage as a threat. As Sylvia Barack Fishman reports in *Double or Nothing?*, a number of communal leaders and other observers have argued that the weakening of Jewish endogamy is actually a benign, even a positive, development. On this view, intermarriage represents not a falling-away from the Jewish people but an encouraging *addition* to the number of American households with Jews in them. Could it be that intermarriage is a blessing in disguise?

Fishman, a professor of Jewish studies at Brandeis, has addressed this subject before. Indeed, *Double or Nothing?* is essentially an expanded version of a study, based on more than 200 interviews with both intermarried and "inmarried" couples, that she conducted for the American Jewish Committee in 2001.

In the first part of the book, Fishman lays out the patterns she discovered among her interviewees. The "vast majority" of intermarried couples consist of individuals, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, who perceive themselves as "independent" or "different" from the community in which they grew up; they tend to be people who in childhood received little or no religious education, who considered their parents religiously "hypocritical," and who found their own religious traditions irrational or repressive. The Jewish partners in such marriages often describe childhood homes that were "too materialistic," while their Gentile spouses speak of parents who themselves had changed their religious affiliation.

Many of these young people, according to Fishman, first attempted to please their parents by dating or even marrying someone from their own religious background. Often, though, they would "sabotage [these] in-faith relationships by picking a person they could never be happy with, and then, predictably, ending that relationship." For the Jewish partners in particular, she writes, "Being romantically involved with a non-Jew" was "a powerful tool for expressing individuation and separation from parents."

The second part of the book describes how intermarriage works out in practice, particularly on the religious front. Such couples, Fishman found, are more likely to incorporate Jewish activities into their daily lives if they have encountered, often in the context of the birth of their children, a "rabbi-mentor." Nevertheless, there are dramatic differences between even those intermarried families who identify themselves as Jewish and "inmarried" households—that is, those in which both husband and wife are Jewish. Among the latter, only about 6 percent report having a Christmas tree; among the former, some 60 percent do. Fishman also discovered a strong tendency for Christian observances to increase over time, despite agreements made before or in the early stages of the marriage. Jewish spouses often feel guilty about "winning" the discussion over religion, and also say that, over time, Christian celebrations become less alien to them.

In the final third of the book, Fishman examines the broader American cultural context for intermarriage. Starting with films as early as *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and extending to *Annie Hall* (1977) and beyond, she traces the inexorable message of the entertainment industry. In countless movies, plays, and novels—most of them created by Jews—"the ability of minority groups to marry persons from the mainstream culture" has been presented, she writes, "as a test of

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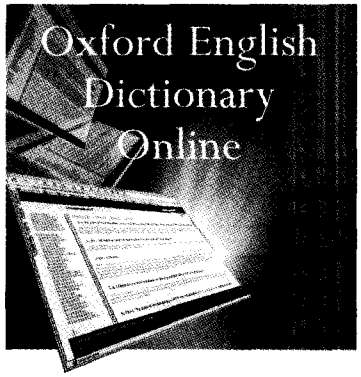

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whether democratic ideals reign in American lives."

FISHMAN SHOWS admirable calm in discussing this charged and emotional topic, and she tries to do justice to the various attempts to put intermarriage in a positive light. Though the broad-minded tolerance of modern America has been a chief engine of intermarriage, it has also helped to spark, she recognizes, an "extraordinary revitalization" of ethnic cultures, not the least of them being traditional Judaism. As she writes, "a substantial portion of American Jews has become newly engaged by Jewish culture, history, and religious expression."

Nor does Fishman dismiss out of hand the arguments of groups like the Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI), which openly welcomes interfaith couples. As she notes, the JOI understands itself to be bowing not just to social reality but to the demands of Jewish tradition. In the words of the group's executive director, instructions for "loving the stranger" are repeated throughout the Torah, "more often than any other commandment."

Yet, as Fishman understands, it is one thing to welcome the stranger on your own terms, within existing boundaries, and quite another to blur those boundaries beyond recognition. Just as biblical Judaism insisted on "the differences between men, women, slaves, and animals," she writes, so too did it refuse to "obliterate the status demarcations between Israelite and resident stranger." Indeed, Jewish survival over the centuries has depended in large measure on such separateness and on what Fishman calls "the efficacy of quotidian Jewish behavior codes." As the writer Ahad Ha'am famously put it, "more than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews."

WHERE FISHMAN'S account disappoints is in her treatment of demographic questions. It is not that she ignores the gloomy prospects suggested by the high rate of intermarriage among American Jews. Citing the work of the historian Jonathan Sarna, she notes the rapid disappearance through intermarriage of the ancient Jewish community of Kaifeng in China and of the French Huguenots of 18th-century New York City. "These historical models," she writes, suggest that American Jews, like other ethnic Americans, are fast on their way to losing any connection to "the rich and complex religious and cultural traditions they are heirs to."

As for hard demographic data, Fishman provides glimpses of the key numbers from the 1990 and 2000 National Jewish Population Surveys throughout her text and in an appendix. Sobering as these are, they reveal only part of the story.

In an NJPS chart reproduced in part by Fishman, the intermarriage rate is broken down by sex, region, Jewish education, and parental religion. Two factors leap out as dramatically correlated with whether or not a Jew marries another Jew: home life and education. Thus, among Jews who have received yeshiva or day-school education, only 7 percent choose non-Jewish spouses. Conversely, among those born to intermarried parents, fully 75 percent are themselves intermarried. In brief, if Judaism is not a central and ongoing part of life, young people are unlikely to consider it important enough to influence their choice of a spouse.

Also missing from Fishman's account—as from virtually every major discussion of this subject sponsored by the organized Jewish community—is the most basic of demographic tools: the population projection. The summary report of the most recent NJPS bravely points to "a significant stabilization of the intermarriage rate since 1985-90." This is true, as far as it goes. But what does it conceal? After zooming up from 13 percent before 1970 to 43 percent in 1985-1990, the intermarriage rate stayed the same in 1991-1995 and climbed to "only" 47 percent in 1996-2001. This hardly seems a cause for complacency.

It does not take great statistical imagination to extrapolate from the findings of the NJPS. If roughly half of American Jews are intermarrying, and if three quarters of the children of the intermarried will also intermarry, and if fewer than one third of the children of the intermarried consider themselves Jews, the trajectory can only point in one direction. As the demographer Sergio Della Pergola of Hebrew University concluded, using data from the 1990 NJPS, the American Jewish community is on course to shrink by 59 percent by 2080—from 5.5 million to about 2.3 million. (On the basis of the 2000 survey, Della Pergola has lately revised his projections slightly upward.)

Such long-term projections are of course notoriously prone to being disproved. But the short-term outlook is bad enough. Lightly as Sylvia Barack Fishman may tread, the seemingly inescapable conclusion of *Double or Nothing?* is that many American Jews are living in a world of delusion, abashed by the political incorrectness of opposing intermarriage and yet certain that Jewish life in America will somehow continue into the indefinite future. But there is no avoiding the alternatives posed by Fishman's title: if it is ridiculous to say that intermarriage has brought about a "doubling" of American Jewry, the likelier truth is that the nontraditional sectors of the community are barreling, however obliviously, toward nothingness.

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Hitler's Helpers

The Coming
of the Third Reich
by Richard J. Evans
Penguin. 656 pp. $34.95

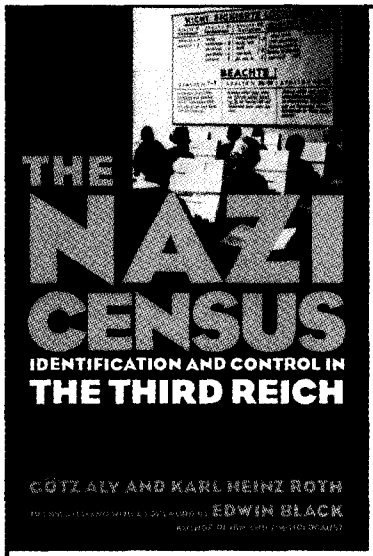
Reviewed by
Sean McMeekin

In the last several years, a new version of 20th-century history has been gathering momentum in Germany, one in which Germans at last receive their own share of the contemporary world's most precious moral commodity: victimhood. Pushed along by sensational books on subjects like the postwar expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe, this unattractive revisionism burst into the open during the lead-up to the Iraq war, when some German intellectuals and political figures began conflating their opposition to Bush-administration policy with the supposed victimization of their own country by Allied bombing during World War II.

The time is therefore opportune for someone once again to set the record straight about Nazi Germany. This, indeed, appears to have been the aim of Richard Evans, a professor of history at Cambridge who has just released the first of three projected volumes on the Third Reich. Evans came to prominence in 2000 as a key witness for the defense team in the David Irving trial in London, where he convincingly demonstrated the systematic distortions, adding up to Holocaust denial, in Irving's work.

Clearly, Evans has little patience for arguments tending to relativize Nazi crimes, whether advanced by revisionist historians or by slippery German politicians. In the preface to

Sean McMeekin *teaches European history at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. His book,* The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willy Münzenberg, *has recently been published by Yale.*



THE NAZI CENSUS
IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL IN THE THIRD REICH
Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth
Translated and with a Foreword by Edwin Black, author of *IBM and the Holocaust*

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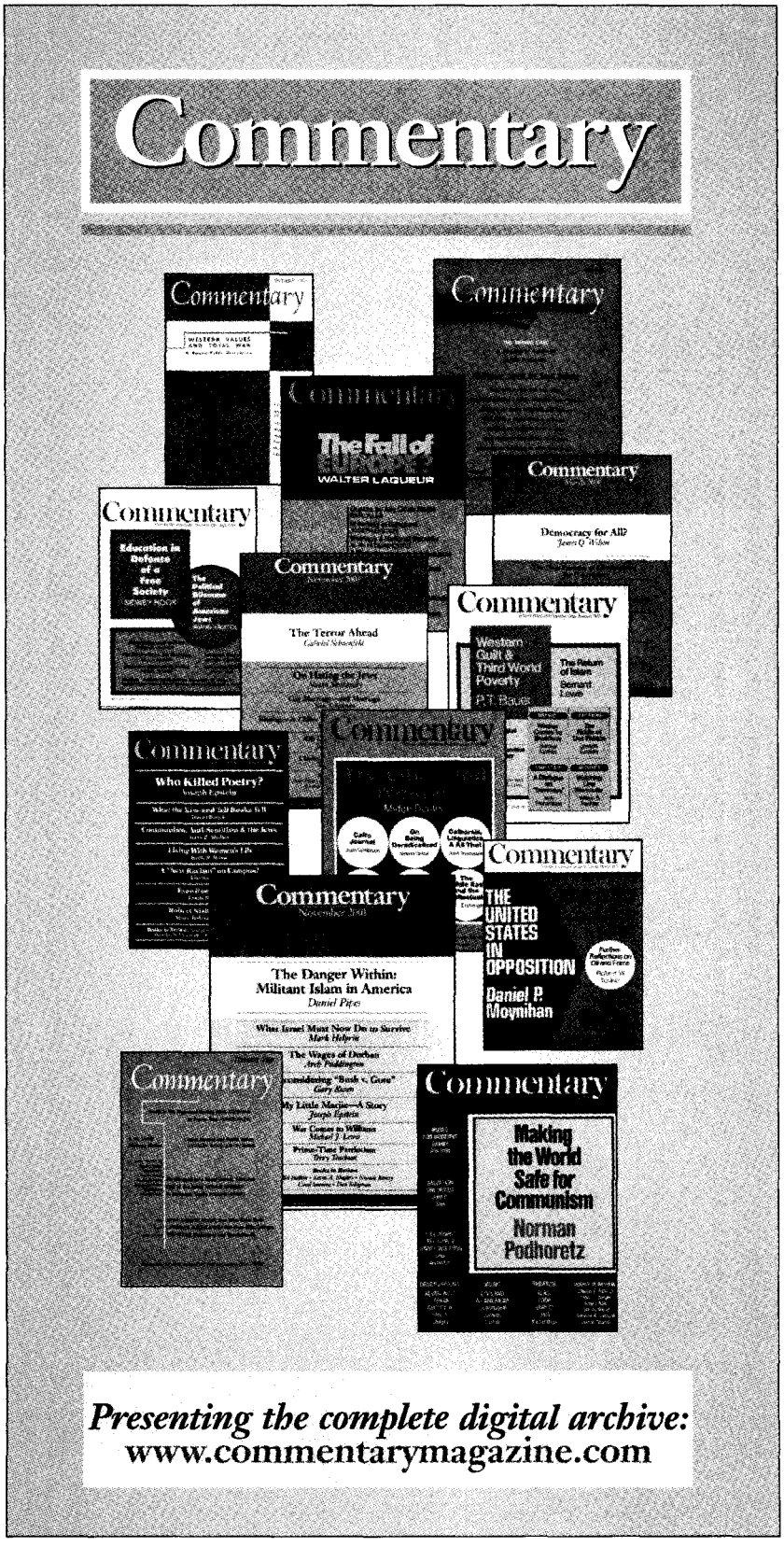

The Coming of the Third Reich, he promises to show instead how "the Nazis managed to establish a one-party dictatorship in Germany within a very short space of time, and with seemingly little real resistance from the German people." If anything, this prosecutorial language calls to mind the approach taken in recent years by authors like Michael Burleigh (*The Third Reich: A New History*) and Daniel Goldhagen (*Hitler's Willing Executioners*).

But it turns out that Evans does not really want to play the part of a hanging judge. After his opening remarks, he rather surprisingly pledges "to avoid using language that carries moral, religious, or ethical baggage with it," aiming instead to return to old-fashioned narrative history and, while avoiding hindsight, "to tell the story of the Third Reich in chronological order, . . . to show how one thing led to another." Nor, he assures us, will his trilogy be addressed to specialists, but rather to "people who know nothing about the subject, or who know a little and would like to know more." The result is rather more equivocal than these words might suggest.

EVANS'S FIRST volume takes us from Bismarck's creation of the "Second" German Reich in 1871 up to the advent of the Third in 1933. Despite his expressed desire to avoid hindsight, inevitably his focus is on historical precedents that helped set the stage for Hitler's triumph.

Evans begins his story with Bismarck's controversial *Kulturkampf* against Catholics in the 1870's, followed in the next decade by the emperor's ban on the German Social Democratic party (SPD). In Evans's telling, this two-pronged offensive against "enemies of the Reich," which amounted to a "massive assault on civil liberties," was not only tolerated but even applauded by many German liberals at the time. It also had lasting effects: although the country's Catholics were eventually welcomed into the political main-

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stream, the anti-socialist law opened up an "unbridgeable political divide" between the SPD and the "bourgeois" parties that would "endure well into the 1920's and play a vital role in the crisis that eventually brought the Nazis to power."

Likewise leading to ominous developments in governance was World War I. Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff, by "pushing the civilians aside" in 1916, set up what Evans calls a "silent dictatorship." This went even farther than Bismarck in placing "severe curbs on civil liberties"—eerily foreshadowing "the more drastic fate that overtook German democracy and civil freedom less than two decades later."

Finally, according to Evans, the Weimar republic established after the collapse of the German empire in 1918 was never able to strike deep roots. From the start, the police and judiciary retained a heavy "right-wing and anti-republican bias." Lacking the old imperial color and ceremony, the republican regime remained "unloved and undefended by its servants in the army and bureaucracy." As for the SPD, which emerged as one of the pillars of the governing establishment, its members were still seen by the police as dangerous "subversives," just as they had been in Bismarck's day and just as they would be again under the Nazis.

"Where the law and its administrators were against [the Republic]," Evans asks, "what chance did it have?" The question is rhetorical, but he nevertheless proceeds to answer it by methodically listing the "weaknesses of Weimar," from the hostility of judges and business magnates, to the disturbing emergence of anti-Semitic paranoia in popular culture, to the gradual rise of Hitler's Nazis from a fringe group of racists into a major political party, to the erosion of the pro-republican majority in the Reichstag as early as 1928. By the early 1930's, Evans concludes, the Republic was moribund, the Reichstag powerless.

Lest all this began to sound like an exercise in the hindsight he promised to avoid, Evans does admit that the "Nazi party was in decline" in the months before Hitler's accession to power, reeling from losses of over 2 million voters in the November 1932 elections and nearly bankrupt. He also allows that many Germans who voted for the Nazis did not share the party's anti-Semitism (which Hitler often downplayed depending on his audience), and that a clear majority voted *against* the Nazis in March 1933, even after the Reichstag fire (which the Nazis used as a pretext to terrorize opposition parties). But where other historians have regarded such facts as crucial to any sober assessment of German responsibility for what followed, Evans does not think they mattered much in the end. Democracy was fated for destruction, whether destined to be replaced by "a Nazi dictatorship or a conservative, authoritarian regime backed by the army." Either sort of government, he writes, "would almost certainly have imposed severe restrictions on the Jews" and waged a future war of aggression against the Soviet Union.

As if to underline this near-inevitability of the Nazi triumph, Evans dwells heavily on the ways in which individual Germans rationalized the onset of political terror in their society. One respectable Hamburg woman to whom he introduces us would later recall her shock at hearing Nazis singing in the streets about "the blood of the Jews which would squirt from their knives," while at the same time admitting that she thought little further of it: "Who took that seriously then?" On the other hand, so many civil servants stampeded to join the new ruling party that Nazi leaders grew "disgusted" by their opportunism.

This broad social background, Evans suggests, is what facilitated the cruel efficiency of Nazi purges of Jewish influence in music, the arts, and the universities, not to mention

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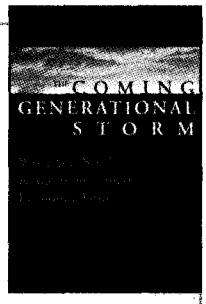

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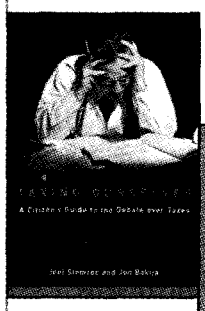

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the boycotts of Jewish businesses and even the murder of Jews in the streets by Nazi storm troopers—events, he reminds us, that were well under way as early as the summer of 1933, when he wraps up his story.

IT IS in writing about the social background to Nazism that Evans becomes most animated, and is consistently lucid and convincing. Throughout this volume, he displays greater interest in the thoughts and actions of "ordinary" Germans than in the decisions of powerful men. There is nothing wrong with that in and of itself, of course. But in an avowedly "comprehensive" narrative account for the general reader, it is far from sufficient. Such an account cannot be complete without grappling with economics, war, and diplomacy—matters that unfortunately do not engage Evans's interest to anything like the same degree.

Thus, World War I, a cardinal event that by his own lights helped lower the threshold for violence in Germany, merits all of six pages in *The Coming of the Third Reich* (and those pages are not without errors). Major diplomatic developments are nearly invisible: although Evans notes that "clandestine training sessions in Russia" allowed the postwar German army to test new weapons illegally, he seems unaware of the Rapallo treaty of 1922 that made this possible. German war reparations receive but passing mention, as if they were one minor annoyance among many; we get no sense of how critical this issue was for the Nazis, who exploited it mercilessly, and no idea of the crushing burden it presented to Germany's republican government, over which it hung like a sword of Damocles.

The Depression is another subject that is shortchanged; in the five pages he devotes to it, Evans does not even begin to explore the crucial matter of wages and unemployment that lay at the heart of the polarized debate of the early 1930's. Readers will likewise learn little here about the bitter struggle on the Left, which saw Germany's Communists, on orders from Moscow, denouncing SPD leaders as "social fascists" and often collaborating with the Nazis against them.

When it comes, finally, to the critical events in Hitler's path to power, much is again simply missing. Astonishingly, Evans passes over the tense encounters in which Hindenburg, now president of Germany, twice sought emphatically to rebuff Hitler. On the second such occasion, Hindenburg let it be known through a widely publicized press release that appointing the Nazi leader to the German chancellorship was "something he could never reconcile with his oath and his conscience." How, then, was Hindenburg later convinced to violate both oath and conscience by doing just that? Having failed to pose the question, Evans cannot provide an answer.

BY IGNORING the cruel dilemmas faced by statesmen like Hindenburg, and instead lumping together all of Germany's conservative politicians and generals as "fellow-ideologues," Evans implies that they were all guilty of something, if not exactly the same thing as the Nazis. But in doing so he in effect also absolves them of responsibility for their own actions, since, in his reading, everybody—conservatives, generals, and Nazis alike—was equally to blame, and in any case Weimar democracy was doomed.

In this respect, Evans's narrative follows, though in a much less extreme way, the circular approach taken by Daniel Goldhagen in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, for whom all of German society was infected with an "exterminationist" strain of anti-Semitism. But if the triumph of Nazism was historically fated, whether on account of shared genocidal tendencies (Goldhagen) or of institutional inevitability (Evans), then there is nothing anyone could have done to stop it. And if everyone was guilty, then no one was. In that last proposition, one begins to glimpse the secret of Goldhagen's peculiar popularity in Germany, as well as the seeds of today's fantasy of German victimization.

What is needed as an antidote to such false and self-contradictory theories is a history of Nazism that invites readers to grapple with the problem of individual responsibility, and with the critical decisions made (or not made) by key players that helped bring about the catastrophe. Although it is not too late for volumes two and three, thus far Richard Evans has not proved to be the man for the job.

We mourn the death of

Robert A. Riesman

1919-2004

A member of the COMMENTARY Publication Committee since 1992,

valiant fighter, cherished friend.

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Swan House

A Novella

David Gelernter

"YUP, THE girl is Ada Landau." Then he turned the photo over and looked at the back: *Saul Sharfstein and Ada, Swan House, April 1940*, in brown ink.

She said, "I think it's the most romantic picture I've ever seen."

He turned it over again and they both considered it. They were a man of seventy-eight and a woman in her mid-thirties, sitting away from the others, patients and visitors and nurses clustered on the rear patio of the Westchester Home for Senior Citizens—Union of Progressive Jewish Charities. A formerly grand house. It was fall 1996 and he had given her the photo yesterday, as promised.

Her mid-length satin hair (incurling along the bottom edge) stood still like drapery when she moved her face. He was a big man with deep handsome eyes.

Eventually he said, "I guess I see what you mean. She *was* beautiful." His voice had the rough authority of a heavy truck advancing.

"It's not only that. She is beautiful, and you're handsome, but that's not what I mean." She looked right at him and the intensity of her eyes shook him—they had the improbable iridescence of a glow-in-the-dark sea creature. "What I mean is," she said, "the way she's resting her fingertips on your chest. Your right arm pressing her close—you can see how strong it is. And there's something in your face. . . ."

"Lust?" Smiling.

She shook her head without looking up. "I mean—not that lust isn't included." She looked up and smiled back tentatively. Her voice was a surprising dark clarinet alto. She had long legs and her all-over blondness, mother-of-pearl. Her jaw line was more emphatic and her skin coarser than they might have been, but her pale distant prettiness (white daffodil) affected him powerfully.

DAVID GELERNTER *is a professor of computer science at Yale, the author of* Machine Beauty, Drawing Life, 1939, *and other books, and a regular essayist for this magazine on a variety of subjects. Mr. Gelernter's series, "Judaism Beyond Words," appeared in these pages in five installments in 2002 and 2003. He has also written fiction for* COMMENTARY *and art criticism for* COMMENTARY *and the* Weekly Standard, *where he is a contributing editor.*

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He felt the high heat of her curiosity playing over him like a flashlight beam.

"Possessiveness?" he tried. "Ownership?" Then, half to himself, "Arrogance?"

"Tell me about it," she said. "You promised you would."

It was a sunny silver afternoon in New Rochelle, the day after a hurricane. Torn-off oak, maple, birch, and tulip-poplar branches lay in acrobatic splits all over the patio. There were stems and scattered petals of yellow mums and pink cosmos and the coarse, sweet autumn smell of the torn mums.

"April 1940. Well." Reluctant sigh. "Poland had long since been occupied: beaten bloody, collapsed. Stomped by those German boots. The noise, the flags in your face, those *roaring* songs, roaring, like a furnace. And those goddamned boots. I would've made it so that no German could wear boots ever again. *Verboten*. Five thousand years from now German kids would be asking their mothers, how come I can't ever wear boots?"

She was listening hard, leaning forward, two fingers posted at her temple in semi-salute to keep the hair out of her face in the wind.

"So." Lapsing back into quiet. "Poland was occupied, Denmark occupied, Norway invaded, Western Europe smoldering. Mobilized."

He looked at her closely. She held her face up for inspection and then turned to show her profile: self-mocking little smile.

"Don't you know there's a law against beautiful young ladies harassing old men?"

"Could you have me arrested?"

"You better believe it." He swept a twig off the ground and twirled it between his fingers. "Anyway, that was April 1940."

"What was she *doing* in this country?"

"You really don't know anything about it, Miss . . . sorry, what was it?"

"Please call me Gwyn. No, nothing," rushing to catch up with the question. "All I know is, I'm jealous of Ada."

"*Jealous*? Gwyn, honey." But now he was gentle and remote. She felt the tug on her line but then nothing: a fish who couldn't decide. "You *do* know nothing." He lunged for another twig, then dropped it.

"True, but couldn't I be jealous, just . . . *anyway*?"

"Maybe it's a deeper question than you know."

"Then tell me about it."

DESPITE HIS old-man's voice and lined face and hands, there was no slack in him; he filled his body to the boundaries. "Thousands of Jews frantic to get out of Europe and one little girl frantic to get back in." He stopped. "And save them. Not just the Jews. Europe in general. She'd been in this country with her family for several years. She had a life here. She was happy. She was sixteen when she first came, nearly seventeen. But she was Belgian; she wanted to go back. *But* she was also in love with me. Sort of. And that's it. Basically that's it."

"No, please. Come on."

"Come on?"

He looked up at the clouds, bright pewter edges against a perfect sky.

His face was imposing: handsome eyes quietly watching. A manly profusion of silver curls around the heavy gold wristwatch on the heavy copper wrist. Usually a vague question gathered at the center of his eyebrows, which were pulled together slightly as if by drawstring. He might have been (in his well-made blue blazer, his loafers, his open-collared white shirt) an ex-CEO or retired general or multimillionaire, or all three.

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"Yes, come on. You said you'd tell me. And what was Swan House?"

"What *was* Swan House? What was it all about? Who the hell knows."

"But please. You said. Please?"

He tried looking blankly distant but gave up—the smile broke through; and then (for her benefit) he shrugged, turning himself in, feeling pleased and ridiculous. Time stopped momentarily, snagged on something. The breezy surf-sound rushing up around them, falling back.

"Ada arrived in America in 1937. Her father had been hired by Owen Lawrence, Jr., heir to the shipping fortune, to be a tutor for his son Raymond. Prepare him for Princeton."

"Owen Lawrence Junior," she repeated carefully, using her pale dry lips and no voice. The wind had kicked up and he barely heard her.

"Ray was fifteen. . . ."

"I know you're a poet," Gwyn said in a sudden sprint, eyes shining through her own personal ocean of mysterious fervor, reaching a hand out (with a blue-green flash off the small stone in her ring) to touch his wrist, a wait-hear-me-out gesture that made him stiffen. "Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. I know you wrote a poem called 'Swan House.' I'm sorry, I do know that."

"*Was* a poet. A bad poet. Why are you sorry?" She had touched him and he wanted to touch her back. She had joined the staff here two weeks ago. He had noticed her that very first day, and for some reason she had seemed to notice him too. Yesterday she had asked him for an old snapshot—so nervous she was barely intelligible. Today he had handed it over.

"Well, I mean," she said, "just, I know you're a poet, and you wrote that poem. 'Swan House.'" She scanned his face, but what she saw made her look down in confusion. "I mean: I apologize, I withheld information."

"There is nothing a beautiful young girl can say or do to an old man for which she needs to apologize. No such thing exists."

"Nothing? You're very sweet. But I'm not so young, and you're not so old. And I'm not so beautiful, either."

"Don't kid yourself. You're not a nurse, are you?"

"No, I work with computers: databases, that stuff. Please, go on."

"Ada's father, professor of Greek in Louvain—one of the few Jews in the world to hold such a position at the time—came to America with his whole family. Not that *he* cared about being a Jew. His eldest daughter was the one. Ada cared, in her weird, outrageous way. She wasn't religious, in fact she was ignorant; she wasn't a Zionist, she was 100-percent European. And yet by 1939 when she said the word *goyim*—Gentiles?" (she nodded and he coughed once, intensity taking him outside his normal voice range) —"it would make my skin crawl, the sheer concentrated *ferocity*. . . . Out of this little girl. This gorgeous little girl. You're not Jewish are you Gwyn?"

She shook her head (although he saw her hesitate first, for just an instant): "Born and raised Episcopalian."

"Okay," reassuring smile, which seemed to be called for; "it's no crime."

"THE FATHER, the professor, was a handsome elegant man with heavy eyelids. With the clinging traces, like aftershave, of a mocking, conspiratorial smile; it vanished when you looked at him too closely. The professor and his wife and Ada and her two younger sisters moved into the fabulous Lawrence mansion—Swan House. Which had plenty of room for everybody. I'm still not absolutely sure why I'm telling you this."

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"Because I begged you to."

"Well, that's a reason. As my rabbi, God bless him, used to say: that's a reason. So. Why the hell *did* he come?" His voice expressed a focused puzzlement that still bothered him, like a face he couldn't quite place. "Quit a prestigious university position? Not for money. Maybe foresight.

"I always wondered whether he'd maybe felt the need to get Ada *out* of there. Get her away from something or other. Some man or other. Ada laughed that one off. She thought I was funny. That was okay. A man wants to amuse a girl. But over time I became more and more positive there was something to it. I don't say I wasn't paranoid, I was, but all the same. . . . So: the professor set to work educating Raymond, who was a sullen boor. So stupid." He looked into the forest beyond the patio, sharpening the recollection by focusing his gaze.

"Ray was strongly suspected of being a homosexual, but the case was never absolutely clear and the Swan House staff always left a margin for doubt in their minds, out of respect for Mr. Lawrence. They admired him. Everyone did. He was a lovely man. He'd lost his wife when he was young, and never remarried. He had a beautiful alabaster sadness; I guess I wrote that in a poem once." (Actually he had written it only a few weeks ago, in one of an endless series of private poetry logs. He filled one notebook and then, before starting fresh on an empty, burned the old one in the barbecue pit on the patio, leaving a sooty spiral backbone behind.) "You could see into Mr. Lawrence as far as befitted his dignity, which wasn't far; and then the view stopped."

She crossed her legs, and the swish of her stockings was a sound so close to a feel, he wanted to groan. She smoothed her skirt. He looked at the swell of her upper leg beneath the summery beige.

He looked at the sky.

"Ada and her family arrived in January, and that May I showed up at Swan House with my Dad, and met her. May '37. She was nearly seventeen and I was eighteen. 'Miss Landau, may I present Saul Sharfstein.' Mr. Lawrence introduced us. Mr. Sharfstein was charmed. Or let's say—staggered. Miss Landau nodded and walked.

"She was shy. Tense. Coiled tight. It made her sparkle, crazily. Desperate animal. Foreigner—uncertain of her English; her gorgeous French-lit, moonlit English. Everything about her was electric. Her grace and delicate darkness and long neck and fluent hands, in summer her bare arms; her wildly articulate eyes.

"But then you noticed her essence"—he had made a fist, which was hovering near his mouth—"which was . . . let's say, she was almost *inconceivably* high-strung. As if her whole life felt like ice beneath her feet that might crack at any second. She was the only girl I ever knew, the only *person*, who could dominate a room by thinking. You'd watch her; you couldn't help it. You'd watch her as if she were actually *doing* something." He shook his head.

"She was a beautiful skater, snicking backward in frozen sunshine on a lake in a park in a forest, beckoning with her cupped hands—"

His voice had grown rougher and he stopped abruptly, stalled-out. He looked at the distance. "She was so damned stagey, so histrionic she'd be acting even when there was no one to see her; but, genius has its privileges. Don't I know it. Lord. First time I ever saw her, she was up on the roof patio looking east as if she were staring out to sea—toward Belgium—hair blowing, beautiful pose; although she had no idea I was watching, and wouldn't have cared anyway."

Fast clouds pulled the sunshine shapes into sharp focus, then let them blur and erased them and started over.

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"You know," he said, clearing his throat, "you're an awfully . . . *movingly* . . . attractive girl."

Her eyes flared like a struck match and then (settling down) she said, "You sound so shocked."

He shrugged.

"No one's ever said *that* to me before." Her words moved in slow procession. "Someone once said I had good legs." After a moment: "My grandmother used to say I was pretty. But I never believed her."

"*Do* you have good legs?"

"Well." He saw her throat moving, considering. "Yes. Want me to prove it?"

Utterly still: the oaks shifted uncomfortably in the wind.

"No," he said, "proof not required. I'm sorry."

Shmuck. But he was smiling at himself. What else could he do? In careful detail he investigated her offer in his mind. But the logic of pantyhose had always eluded him, and messed up his fantasies.

"MAY OF '37. I'd come out to Swan House for the afternoon with my father, whom the professor had hired to give Ray music lessons. Sort of a subcontract. My father said, if he learns anything about music I'll be flabbergasted; he's got artistic sensibility like a Cossack. But it was a job, and he liked the professor all right and admired Mr. Lawrence. I came along just to keep my Dad company. It was a 90-minute train ride—up from Brooklyn to Grand Central, then out to Westchester, with the city breaking up all around you in chunks, floating off into the green countryside. Gradually the laundry lines and rooftop watertanks and chimneypots would disappear and you'd get a lone black Ford, ticking along moodily on a road through a field. After that first Sunday, I kept coming—because this impossibly beautiful, seductive, kittenish, snooty, petrified creature lived there and I could *not stop* thinking about her. Six months' worth of Sundays before I finally coaxed her into talking to me. Week after week. My father understood perfectly. He'd say, 'nu, progress?' and I'd shake my head."

"You're persistent."

"Damned right." A cheerful growl. "But understand—with a girl like this, any young man in the world would've done the same. And her hard-to-getness—naturally, it was a challenge. I had plenty of girls, but none like that." Unexpectedly long pause. "None like that.

"I wanted to be a poet. In fact, according to me, I *was* one, full-fledged at eighteen. Big, beaming kid, curly black hair. Strapping. That's the word. Big shoulders." Using both his lined, taut hands to show her how wide. Then he closed his eyes and gave himself another ironic, affectionate smile. With his eyes closed: "She said to me once, I believe in greatness; you only believe in goodness." With his eyes closed the windshaken branches made the light flicker like an antique movie.

He seemed more comfortable now and she said, "You're a little frightening from a distance, but when you smile, it's—totally different?"

She let her sentences come unglued and curl upward into questions less often than most youngish women nowadays. "The young man you were is always there," he said, "under a million layers of yellowing varnish." The oak leaves tossed and glittered. "I was nothing *but* smile. Smile and mouth. Always mouthing off, always smiling. Pretty harmless. If someone said something nasty to me, I'd be left holding the smile, not knowing how to get rid of it. . . . Why is a lovely girl like you not married?"

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"No one like you ever asked me."

He nodded—"I see"—registering the joke, one for her. He grabbed a branch off the ground. "I was popular, real smoothie; course, no one could ever figure out what the hell I was supposed to *be* when I grew up—charming the pants off girls is not something you can take up professionally. Girls can get out of their own pants, if it comes to that. I was a poet, fine—which didn't answer the question. But people were kind. My folks above all. I was so much less sure of myself than I seemed. Same as most teenage boys, I guess.

"My cousin and best friend Izzy once asked me—we were walking down the Coney Island boardwalk at top speed, as if we had some place to go; a hot spring day—we lived in Brighton Beach near Coney Island—my hands stuck in my pockets, tie loose in the breeze; the two of us shuffling through big crowds of chuckling pigeons, boys screaming girls shrieking on the roller coasters, knish guys walking the beach down below us and shouting—with that flat, swallowed-up sound beach shouting always has, y'know? And the smell of Coppertone, cotton candy, hot dogs and mustard and cigar smoke and those long, gentle rollers off the Atlantic; Lord, that day hangs so clearly in my mind, like a coaster car about to drop. And he asks me: Saul, listen, schlemiel, you think you're the first guy in history to ever read a poem, or write a poem, or fall in love with a girl or get laid? *Pipe down*. And I—" He broke off.

"Anyway: right around then, I first met Ada, and a few weeks later I'm telling Izzy, forget all that, cancel everything, because this *new* girl redefines the whole *concept* of female, no woman in all recorded history has ever had her sheer, lyrical, blah blah blah, which of course was all true, and he says in his dry intelligent voice, 'shiksa?' and I say 'Belgian!' like it was some sort of rare exotic species, and I add 'Belgian Jew' just to clarify, and then he says, in his imitation newsreel voice, for which he was justly celebrated, 'Welcome to *tiny Belgium*, ladies and gentlemen, world famous for the allure of the Flemish female. . . . Does she look like a Rubens?'"

She watched him, her eyes still phosphorescent. "Nothing to say?" he asked gently. "Only *I'm* supposed to talk?"

SHE COLORED, and a vast volume of leaves sighed, and she said, "I have nothing to tell, I'm a nobody, nothing, a failure; I want to listen to *you*."

"You're a failure? Gwyn, honey, don't. 'I'm a failure'—that's *my* line. It's an old man's line." His voice turning hoarser, louder. "Don't say that, it's *irresponsible*." He felt strangely breathless—that she should have spoken those words which were his, and impaled him permanently; she had no concept. None whatsoever. None.

Her eyes reproached him but her voice was contrite. "I'll say whatever you want me to. Just please go on."

"Y'know, nearly all men do figure out eventually"—chastened, propitiatory—"what they want, and who they are. And nearly all of us die without ever telling anyone. Not a soul. Not our wives or daughters or mothers or fathers or sweethearts or dearest friends, or whatever we've got. If anything. Men just aren't physiologically *equipped* to confide. Virtually every one of us takes his secret with him, the one fact that would've made people sit up and say—no, not really?"

She looked at him hard and shook her head slightly, opened her lips (just barely) to speak—but then didn't.

"Naturally I tried to chat her up, Ada, which had always worked before, with all sorts of girls. But she'd just give me a look and walk away. Often she seemed to be

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trembling slightly when she put me down. Mainly she stayed out of sight, and my father was off some place with Ray. Every week I brought her flowers. Hopefully. Innocently. If I actually succeeded in presenting them and she said, 'Thank you, Mr. Sharfstein'—ice cold, condescending, scared—that was a stupendous triumph. She didn't spit in my face: break out the champagne! Well, that's what young men are like—*if* the girl is beautiful enough.

"Week after week, every Sunday: never entered my head that I'd fail to get her eventually. I was there because of Ada, but gradually I started noticing Swan House, too. Lord I was impressed, awestruck. Velvet silence, majestic, mysterious; like the girl herself. Like Ada. One of the first things I ever heard her say was, 'No one's ever heard of Swan House, but I think it's one of the most fantastically beautiful masterpieces in the entire world.' She was talking to my father, not me. But it gradually sank in, as I showed up week after week and waited patiently, with my tongue hanging out: she seemed to feel for Swan House what I felt for her.

"Which was good, because—at least she *can* feel. She was emotional, she was passionate, but I sometimes wondered: is it part of her magnificence to be just a little cold, abstract, removed from ordinary humans? But the way she loved Swan House reassured me."

"If you can fall in love with a building," Gwyn asked tentatively, "does that mean you can fall in love with a person?"

It seemed like a long time before he finally said, "Good question."

He continued. "The place was called 'Swan House' because of a moat around the garden temple at the peak of a hill. There used to be swans in the water, but they were gone long before my time. The temple was designed so you'd want to see into it but you couldn't."

"A garden temple? It's a romantic idea, isn't it."

"Certainly is." Their long, deep thoughts intersected far away, crossing searchlight beams. They both felt it happen. He looked at her, but her face said only, "speak more," so he did. "I hung around watching Ada watch Swan House—barely got to see her at all. When I did, she'd barely speak to me. But I kept coming, because she was dazzling and I would have given everything I owned—admittedly not much—to hold her hard. To achieve that, I would have given 50 years off my life. And I guess I did."

"I had three girlfriends that summer in Brooklyn—Arlene, Angela, Marnie. Arlene's mother always used to say it with the accent on the first syllable, *Ar*lene, as if it were a Yiddish name—Shayna, Chava. . . . All three with their energetic faces and smooth skin and pulled-back, soap-smelling hair. We'd go to Coney Island. Or I'd take Arlene to a movie and we'd sit in the big rustling crowd and when the newsreels came on, you got a kind of shared seriousness, even the kids; you'd feel the whole crowd drawing itself up. Hitler would appear. People would snicker and snort, uncomfortably. Afterward I'd kiss Arlene in the dark corners of the big echoey lobby of her apartment house. She claimed, years later, that once I'd dragged her out onto the front stoop at my Aunt Lettie's, out of a steam-heated Chanukah dinner with a billion screaming cousins into zero-degree Brooklyn cold—'in my cotton blouse,' she tells me, 'so you could recite Shelley's "Hymn of Apollo" as if you had just written it, or you'd bought the rights or something, you were so ecstatic about this poem—and my teeth were chattering and I was practically turning *blue*; but I realized how much the thing meant to you when you didn't cop a feel, or kiss me, or *anything*, which I'd thought was the

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whole point of taking me out there. But all you did was recite this dumb poem. I was touched.'

"I had a teenage weakness for Shelley. I admit it. But anyway: Ada was wholly different."

"Actually I *was* married."

Like a package tumbled from a shelf her words stopped them both. Before he could speak she rushed ahead: "I only wanted to correct my false statement. Please—go on."

"*When* were you married?"

She shook her head with childlike vigor. "I want to hear about you."

"Gwyn, honey, you sound frantic. Why? What's so important about hearing about *me*?"

"It is. It just is. Please?"

"And the reason is?" But she only shook her head. "You *want* to be mysterious?"

"No, oh no," she said, "only just . . . don't torment me; just tell me the story."

"What if I like tormenting you?" Playfully.

"Then do. Just please tell me the story first."

He gave a long low question-mark whistle and then waited in case she should say more. She looked at her lap. She traced carefully on the convex upper surface of her crossed leg the imaginary outline of a flower. He watched her softly looping fingertip and sighed without meaning to. "Please?" she said again. Bright roar of the wind gathering strength. He continued.

"Ada seemed unhappy and simultaneously so self-contained that I got to thinking, even before I'd really met her, that she *must* have a lover or boyfriend back home in Louvain or Liège or someplace. That wasn't such a crazy guess, was it?" Still looking down she mouthed the word "No" with deliberate emphasis. Then she looked up and smiled. A strange thought passed through his head and disappeared before he could focus on it, an exotic bird come and gone.

"I kept trying. She kept ignoring me. Finally I came up with a plan. It came to me on the train home to Brooklyn, just as the Park Avenue tunnel came rushing up around my ears, a moment I will always remember. Always. I thought, well, yeah, sure, I could do that but—hell, that's it! Sure, *that* would work!" He was smiling faintly, not at her.

"If I could tell her the real story about the secrets of Swan House, *that* would get the empress's attention. This lithe scared empress whom I always imagined, for some reason, slipping one hand and then the other through the neck hole of her summer dress and then standing with arms raised high and wrists together as it slides to the floor and drops around her elegant slim ankles. So. I just had to get Mr. Lawrence to tell me all about it. How? Tell him I wanted to write a book about Swan House. Why? Because Swan House was an unknown, neglected artistic masterpiece. The whole thing came to me in an instant, you know how it works. Not in this elaborate form. But the idea came straight from Ada, from that one overheard comment. And I knew he loved the house. Ray on the other hand didn't give a goddamn about the house, so it all fit beautifully.

"It *was* a pretty good plan, wasn't it? Don't y'think? It was beautiful."

They both smiled.

"Next week, the last summer Sunday before my freshman year at Brooklyn College, I charged off to find Mr. Lawrence. He was sitting in his study. Heavy buzz of flies, carnations—you could smell them, oversweet. He was reading the newspaper, holding it in both hands in a way that made him look old. He smiled

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encouragingly when I knocked and put my head in. It made me sad, I still remember it—no one ever talked to him much.

"The book idea was just a stratagem. But when he stood up—I was standing, too, too excited to sit—and clapped me on the sides of the shoulders with both hands, I was startled. He was so Wasp-dignified, so majestic."

"*You're* majestic."

He stopped perfectly still, gazing at her. Then looked away.

"Well. I must have learned it from him. At length he said, very quietly, 'I've waited my whole life for such an author and such a book.' And then I knew I had to do it: actually *write* the damned thing." A smile on the edge of toppling into laughter. "I'd talked us both into it. I hugged him. Which embarrassed me afterward, acutely. He was sort of frail; majestic nonetheless. We talked all afternoon."

She looked at him with frowning intensity.

"Next week another long talk, and the week after, bull's eye! He told me about the secret system. Triumph. *Triumph*." Lifting two fists drawn tight, in memory of an ancient victory. "You see, Swan House—you don't know this? The secret system?"

"Tell me!"

"Okay. Yes ma'am. Coming right up."

"Mr. Sharfstein." Her serious eyes filled with mild, complacent accusation as she tipped her head back and (brushing hair aside) said confidingly, in a murmur: "You're picking on me."

Flirtatiousness so hushed it amazed him.

"Call me Saul. If you're capable of calling an antique like me by his given name. If it's possible, please do."

"I think I can manage."

"The garden temple: a tall, open pavilion, made of bronze, weathered to a soft gray-green, with bronze Doric columns and a domed roof. There was a raised moat around it, running inside two concentric walls, chest-high, also bronze. The moat's inner wall was actually inside the temple, you couldn't see how far in, so the columns that supported the roof stood in the water. Got that so far? It's hard to picture, I guess."

"No, I see."

"You could tell that the moat was just a moat, a ring around something, a donut; a chest-high donut, or in Ada's case chin-high. And the play of light made you think there was a huge space inside, under the dome; that the floor dropped away, inside the donut hole; but you couldn't really tell. They only tore the thing down eight years ago, can you believe? The S.O.B.'s. But of course you wondered what was inside."

"Of course; what?"

"And you couldn't *see* inside, and you didn't know. You wanted to touch the cool bronze, rap the heavy hollowness of those big columns, but you couldn't reach to touch. The moat was wide and deep, and the lip of the outer wall was too narrow to perch on."

"What *was* inside?"

"I'll tell you, but I have to get to that. So I'd walk around the moat with my sleeves rolled up and slosh my hands through the coldness; cool pressure between your fingers. Small fish cruising around the circuit. Slipslap of the water. Take your arm out

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pattering drips on the dry concrete path. Cool tightening of your skin wet to the elbow. Listening to the fountains—there were water jets in the moat, which also blocked your view to the inside—smelling the mossy cool, composing poetry. When you think you're a poet, it really grabs hold of you."

"You *are* a poet."

He shrugged. "Nonetheless. Swan House was built in 1887, with a so-called public system and a secret system—the secret system meaning this temple—and people said there were other unknown regions too, tucked into the house somehow. And they were right.

"That afternoon Mr. Lawrence showed me old journals and photos and drawings, and the story started to come into focus. The whole time I was studying them, he was studying me. Measuring my sincerity—which kept growing the longer he looked at me. I was transformed over those three long afternoons into an almost-serious young man. Believe it or not. I was rising to the occasion. A downright miracle.

"Maybe I finally succeeded in getting Ada to look at me because of those conversations. Not because of my brilliant scheme, but because I'd actually changed. I've never thought of it that way before. Not once in 60 years. Sometimes you have to say a thing to think it. You know what I mean?" She nodded. "The week after—nearly autumn, 1937—he handed me a heavy bronze key. I'd passed the test. See: the whole secret part of the estate connected to the public part through a single locked door, just *one*—"

He shuffled a hand through his pants pocket and drew out a large dull black key. "And this unlocked it."

"May I hold it?"

"Sure."

Her fingertips touched his palm as she drew it away.

"It still—*exists*?" Overenunciating, working her jaw around.

"Sure. The key does." Eyeing her carefully.

"And . . . the secret system?"

"Part of it. Mr. Lawrence said, 'Tell no one; don't put it in your book. This is only for your personal information.' But I was certain he wouldn't mind my telling one other person. He knew I had a thing for Ada. He knew it better than she did. He was half in love with her himself, wasn't he? Course he was; but y'see, that's another thing that's never really occurred to me before, not really. The mind is a crazy thing." He stopped. "He was as shy around her as she was around him. I doubt the two of them ever had one real conversation, ever."

Then he was quiet, digesting new truth. The wind came booming up suddenly out of nowhere and fell back.

"So. I was all set. I was so desperate for next Sunday to come, so I could find Ada and tell her all about it, lay these discoveries at her feet, I could taste it. I thought I would die of it. I think I almost did."

II

"EARLY OCTOBER '37; next Sunday, at last. Ada was sitting on a bench near the Swan moat, with a book—but then she looked up and I caught her smiling. She tried to undo the smile but she couldn't, and we both realized it was funny. I sat beside her—the big, clumsy, curly, sex-crazed desperado sits beside her—and I said, 'I know the secrets of Swan House. I know the mysteries.' She

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said, 'Ridiculous. Which mysteries?' And I said, 'You know perfectly well which.' The *existence* of the secrets was no secret. She said, 'Oh yes? Okay, tell me.' A half-mocking challenge.

"I escorted her toward the house, toward a side-entrance to the basement. Down a half-flight of stone steps with soft spider webs in the corners like primeval cotton candy, and I creaked the hatch shut over our heads; over to a row of closets—our eyes readjusting to the dank burlap-smelling dark. I opened the second door from the right; snapped a cord taut: bare bulb. You have to get in here with me, I told her, into the closet; the panel won't open unless the outer door is locked.

"'You expect me to *believe* that?,' she said, and it was such a great question I burst out laughing, and anyway I was manic at that point, I would have laughed at anything whatsoever. I was supercharged. I couldn't have planned this layout better if I'd done it myself, I told her, but the fact is, Louis de Ferrara designed it, in 1887. She wanted to know: was the architect of Swan House actually a Sephardic Jew, as she had heard? Like her mother's family? He was, absolutely."

Absently he rubbed his thumb over his curled fingers, aware of her unaccountably hungry eyes floodlighting him.

"I told her some of the history as she stood and thought the thing over, terribly curious and nervous and beautiful, decked out in her full-bore 30's elegance—fashionably tight, tailored, longish skirt, silk blouse with views between the buttons as she looked around, in her cloud of powdery fragrance, with sparklights shooting through her hair. Ordinarily she had a hat too, and white gloves, but she'd only been lounging. And sometimes a bow in her hair, or someplace on her dress. I loved to see her in bows and ribbons. They made her look like a package waiting to be unwrapped.

"Should she or should she not step into this godforsaken little closet in the basement with an obvious sex maniac? Standing right beside her, *talking* to her, felt like a million volts up and down my spine. Ferrara was an insufferably arrogant man, I was telling her, from what people say. The old photographs make him look like Liszt—tangled black hair and gaunt cheeks and a mole and staring eyes. Swan House was his masterpiece, along with the other structures on the estate, two apartment buildings that brought in substantial rental income—the place was self-supporting. Plus the 'marble beach' he'd designed—everyone called it that—a private war memorial to three Lawrence cousins who died at Vicksburg. White marble plaza, a perfect circle 30 feet across with a black iron railing, on Lawrence land in Connecticut at the lip of Long Island Sound—twice a day, with the rising tide, shallow waves would oversweep the plaza and the lettering on its surface: MAY THEIR MEMORY NEVER BE EFFACED, something like that, with their names and dates. Then the plaza became a tidal pool until the tide went out and the letters emerged again, effaced no longer. It was a haunting place, but it needed constant upkeep. In the 30's it was already crumbling."

"I wish I could see it."

"So do I, but it's gone. Then I said, let's go, and shivering just a little she stepped into the closet beside me. Greatest moment of my life. *The* greatest. Her neck as she twisted around inspecting everything; the intricate, dodgy, racy lights in her hair—there was always something trapped and pantherish about her even when she wasn't stuck in a little closet. We were inches apart. You had to turn the key to lock the door, and then—holding the key in position—you reached across and pushed open the secret panel. In that narrow space it was damned hard not to brush against her as I

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reached across to the panel, but I almost managed, and my reward, as I was fiddling with the key, was that she crouched down low and laid her hands flat to the gritty plank flooring on either side, as if she were feeling its temperature—there was empty space below us, which she must have sensed; and inside the tightly-stretched skirt, the shape of her legs and knees emerged clearly, especially the upper one—she had one knee high and one low, elegant always; and she looked up at me with gleams of hilarious conspiratorial satisfaction—and the panel opened: *thwock*.

"And she sprang up and we saw those remarkable cast-iron spiral stairs, one floor down and six up. The shaft lit, just barely, by the shallow glass dome way up high overhead—an echo of the garden temple dome, but in colored glass. She gasped. She was standing in front of me. She shot me her biggest, darkest, raciest look over her shoulder, and up we went.

"Turquoise-colored glass, inset with bright yellow diamond shapes—uranium glass. Something like an aquarium where you stand in the dark, in the magic fish-tank glow.

"And it was full of sound, a tall clock's grave tock click, tock click. Six flights up, but we were kids. We didn't care. It felt like you were climbing a mast; slightly precarious. She was overwhelmed by this luminous secret shaft hidden in the house she inhabited, and I was overwhelmed by her, I had no mass, I was sheer soaring energy. Ferrara's motto was inscribed in the brick wall halfway up: "A Jew Knows Where Truth Hides"—only in Latin, which I asked her how to pronounce, and the answer was a dissertation with about fifteen different alternatives.

"My nose inches from her waist as I followed her scent and swinging skirt up the spiral. As you climbed, the stairs sent out shoots along the way, seductive little passages leading to secret rooms tucked in here and there—Ferrara described it as a secret stem of lilies at the house's center—but best of all was the octagon way at the top, wedged in under the roof, where we were headed. Its three forward sides project out—a cantilevered bay at the very top of the rear façade—see?" Rising slightly, supported on his palms; twisting at the waist, gesturing with his chin. "Right there."

"Wait."

"At the very top."

"Wait" she said, "stop. Wait. You aren't talking about *this house*."

HE LOOKED at her in stagey surprise. "Naturally. This is Swan House. What did you think?"

"But then, what—?" She stood; bent over slightly at the waist, steadying her lightweight skirt against the wind. "I don't understand. How on earth did it—get like *this*? This nursing home? And why are *you*, I completely don't, I don't get. . . ."

"Swan House became my house."

"*Yours*? But then, I mean, how—?" She was breathless.

"I gave it to them. This nursing home. I had to. My money ran out. I couldn't keep it up. They promised to preserve it. They haven't."

She shook her head slowly, staring at Swan House. "It all happened *right here*?"

"Today it's ruined. They tore off the roof patios and the gorgeous outdoor stairways; they wrecked the garden temple—"

"You mean—I've been *working* at Swan House? This is it? This is Swan House, where I am actually *standing*?"

"Sure. I thought you knew that." Smiling so she couldn't tell whether he really had or not.

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"No I never, never *dreamed*, even dreamed—I mean I—when I was a little girl," checking his face with a quick glance, "my grandmother used to tell me these stories about *Swan House*," quaveringly emphatic, "which she always used to say really existed, she had seen it. . . ."

"Why on earth should your grandmother have known about Swan House?"

"Because Owen Lawrence Junior was her husband's uncle."

Silence as they both thought it over.

Then he laughed and said, "*Huh*?" And batted aside a stray bug from in front of his nose. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"That's my name," she said. "My maiden name. Gwyneth Barnes Lawrence."

"You told me that, but it never occurred to me it was *that* Lawrence." Joke on him. But it *was* strange. A falling-backward sensation. "I see. Why didn't you say so to begin with?"

"Because, why should you care? My grandmother told me that Swan House really existed, but naturally I came to assume in later years that I'd heard her, I mean, all wrong. I mean—" She was out of breath. She swallowed. "I had to assume I'd heard my whole entire *childhood* wrong. In my bedroom, as a little child. . . ." She sat abruptly at the end of his deckchair (he jumped his feet aside) without taking her eyes off the building. "I pictured it totally wrong, though, totally, like a medieval fairy castle; my refuge, which I'd reach some day. We lived in Nanuet—across the river?"—stroking her hair to the side—"and I was positive that Swan House was just over the farthest hill from my third-story bedroom window, I'd just somehow *decided*; on snowy blue-glittering Saturday mornings, alone." She kept checking him with fast glances. "My geography was not so great. But knowing about this magic swan palace that was *real* and one day you could reach it, somehow—it gripped me, completely. I'd go up to my room. . . ."

She broke off.

"I take it your childhood was no fun."

"No, not much. No. The 70's were cursed. You can't even imagine." She broke off. "There've always been divorces, bitterness, mothers walking out on families and feeling proud. Well, maybe not always that. And fathers, bringing. . . ." She stopped. "Anyway, the 70's: I come from the age of the special curse."

Gently he said, "And I don't?"

"Maybe we both do." Then, "No. In America, the 70's were rock bottom."

He drew himself up and put one foot on the ground. Touched her cheek and then she was leaning (definitely leaning) against his hand and then he drew his hand back. Fiercely he focused his attention on the house. Her head still leaned to one side, questioning. The softness of her cheek was still present in his fingers, lingering music in a struck bell. "Go on?" she said.

He was looking at the large house. Wounded beast dying. Ever since the disastrous alterations of '91 it hurt him to look, and he almost never did. When he had turned over the property in 1988, the agreement specified that nothing would be changed except insofar as nursing-home needs and code compliance required it.

"I thought I would grow up and my husband would be lord of Swan House," she added, quietly. "I was a little kid. I wanted to be the princess, naturally. So this is it." (A statement not a question.)

"This is it."

She stared silently at the house.

"The agreement also stipulated that if I produced an heir, the heir would get it

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back, immediately—ironclad. Parents would take over as trustees. Ironclad. I wrote that in. I was sixty-six. Another little joke no one got. The lawyers all nodded like imbeciles.

"You can still see the basic shape. Huge but with flowing lines, like a Matterhorn on a long oval base. Who ever heard of an oval house? With gorgeous patios up on its shoulders?—now destroyed, of course. Too imposing ever to seem homey, or even housey. Can only be a shrine. You've seen the stained glass lit from inside at night? The ultramarine and violet diamonds, and crimson and foam green and gold?"

"I've seen it. It's stunning, but I pictured it all wrong."

"Only the Jews, Ada said, build houses that exhale light instead of consuming it. She had all sorts of theories about Ferrara's intentions and symbolism. Some of his notes were scribbled in Portuguese, believe it or not, so she sat herself down and learned Portuguese in about ten minutes and translated them. Swan House shows what Jews have done for Christians, she said; built them a gorgeous palace to live in, and now they're itching to tear it down. Because the Jews, her theory was, had built European civilization, and the Nazis planned to destroy it, and the world was secretly pleased, because—"

"*Wait!*" Peremptory shake of her head. "Tell me about you and Ada and love and the octagon room. Only Jews see the whole world in terms of Jews. No offense, I just mean. . . ."

"Correction: only Jews and anti-Semites."

"But what *happened* up there? . . . My husband was Jewish. It's not. I'm sorry. I only—"

"Forget it, no need."

"I always wanted to be Jewish myself. My husband laughed at me when I told him. About Ada—you were saying?"

He frowned for a moment and then continued. "I put my arm around her. . . ."

"Would you have laughed?"

Another puzzled pause. "Of course not. How could you even *think* such a thing?"

"You put your arm around her, go on."

"On the sofa," he continued, "up there in the octagon—"

"Which is still there?"

"Yes." (She looked back over her shoulder.) "The trees tossing far below and beyond us. . . . And by the end of that afternoon I had made all sorts of progress."

"Meaning?"

"The usual."

"Tell me."

"No. No!" Frowning as his thoughts tightened around the idea. "I'd be taking advantage of you. Wouldn't be right."

"Except I *want* you to," fiercely.

Which surprised him. "That doesn't make it right."

"It does," looking straight at him. "Anyway," she added, "you haven't been all *that* fastidious with me."

He told her.

"After all," he concluded, "she was lonely. That's half the battle—or maybe nine-tenths. . . . A couple of months later, December '37, is when I first really seduced her, or vice versa."

"Where did the steps go, leading down? Out to the temple?"

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"I'll get to that."

"Okay—you first seduced her. And how did that work?"

He told her.

Afterward they both felt (tentatively) transported to the Land of Abnormal Time where you only went, ordinarily, after sex, where no one counted and nothing mattered. But they weren't *quite* there—as if they had been sent by fax. "And after all that, starting that same afternoon, she made a poet out of me, too. My happiness indescribable. She was happy also.

"A month later, January '38, up in the octagon. . . ."

"Oh God," turning to look again.

"We'd made love and I was reciting poetry to her, 'The Eve of Saint Agnes'—"

She closed her eyes. "Keats."

"Keats. But the poem reminded her powerfully, she said—she liked to begin sentences with *but*, and she had a lovely light French accent—or did I say that already?"

"You're telling me about—this is after you made love, but not for the first time. . . ."

"Right."

"And it's January 1938."

"Right. And the Keats poem reminded her of the jewelbox of Sainte Chapelle in Paris, she said, with its beautiful windows—and I asked if it didn't bother her that a Jew should love Christian art. But of course, of course, *no*, she said, because Christianity is a mere glaze over Judaism, a shrine with Judaism inside, not the dead bones of saints but the living truth, like the soul inside a man. How could she say that, in a world of Christian anti-Semitism? But no, she said again, that phase is played out, the anti-Semites of 1938 aren't Christian but anti-Christian; didn't I know anything whatsoever about modern Europe? But the rising giggle in her throat was taking over, she was laughing at me—and she was hungry.

"So I came back with milk, rolls, apples, other stuff. *Milk*."

His thoughts went far away and came back slowly.

"No cigarettes, no liquor, *milk*; we were kids. I'd thought we could drink from the bottle, but she sent me back for glasses. I called her a petite bourgeoise, that's how you talked in those days, and she threw an apple and knocked me on the head, and I wrestled her to the floor. Two giggling kids. I lay in her lap and she bent over me and recited *le soleil éveille, à travers des feuillages, les vieilles couleurs des vitraux irreguliers*. The sun wakes up, through the leaves, the old colors of the irregular windows. Rimbaud."

Gwyn sat with her back to the house, turning every few minutes to glance at it over her shoulder.

"That expression you get after you look," he said, "like a little girl sighing over a matinee idol—it makes you even more beautiful."

It was more than he had planned to say. By far. But now she was watching him so intently that he had to go on.

"Ada wore her beauty on her sleeve—everyone who saw her said gorgeous. Yours comes from someplace deeper." He stopped again, and drew in breath as if he were playing a difficult wind instrument: "don't know quite—what I want to say." A foolish stranded half-smile, as if he had opened the wrong door.

"That's okay. Thank you."

"I don't mean that your appearance is *not* beautiful."

"I understand. Thank you. Go on."

There was more emotion in her eyes than he could account for, except by means of fantastic thoughts he chose not to think.

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He looked at the sky. He frowned. He refocused with a grunt on the past. "January 1938, up in the octagon. The windows were open so we could hear the night overtake us, loose branches prickling, tumbling on the roof, dry leaves on the patio." Squinting into the distance, trying to make it out. "Cold; smell of pine pitch; my first drafts of adulthood coming in through those windows. As it got dark the window glass turned opalescent like stiff shining hypnotized eyes. I had to lock her head between my palms, one on each cool cheek, her head pressed back on the rolled leather arm of the sofa, me hovering over her, and have her say the French poem again. That regal way she had. . . ." His hand paused in the middle of an idea, tracing it out. "Some moments make your life. Dots you connect, and there it is. Less than a year later—"

He stopped, making a fist and holding it vertically like a gavel, pressing his mouth to the top. She reached out a hand to touch his shoulder but hesitated; took it back.

"Less than a year later, right after the Hitler triumph at Munich, right after Munich and because of Munich, the pogrom of Kristallnacht. Germany was an hour away from Liège, where she was born, where they still owned a house with in-laws living in it. And she had family and friends in Germany. I found her that week in her bedroom with the sloping walls, at the end of the long hall past the library, reading about Kristallnacht, on her knees on the floor, with the newspaper spread in front of her, in tears so she could barely talk. She was reading the *Manchester Guardian*. She was gasping for breath. I sat down on her desk chair and just stared; she started to explain, with her voice snagging on tears. I could barely make out what she was saying. But then at some point she looked up at me and just for a moment, still crying, she smiled—she said, 'You look so sad!'"

"So I asked her to marry me. Just popped out. She got up and hugged me. She rested her cheek on my chest—she was still crying—and she said, thank you for asking, I don't know; I have to think."

"I WAS only nineteen. But as I thought about it—first I asked, then I thought, that was me all over—it seemed exactly right. *Obviously* she ought to marry me. So, okay. Next day she telephoned, a rare event—usually we wrote each other, every day—with a crazy proposition: yes she would marry me, if I would take her back to Belgium, and we'd settle there.

"*Why*? German Jews were leaving in droves, they were desperate to get out," his voice rising, "and we should go back to Belgium *right next door*? There were fascists in Belgium too, by the way; plenty. Plenty. She said: because I have to tell them the truth, not that Jews are just as good as filthy Germans but that Jews are infinitely better, that Germans would still be monkeys in trees if Jews hadn't invented morals and holiness and *presented* it to them in the form of Christianity—and she went on, at fantastic length—Proust who created modern literature for them, Pissarro who created modern painting, Heine who perfected the German lyric, on and on, and literary German, would it even exist without Luther's Bible, and where did they get the Bible? And modern English, would *it* exist without the Authorized Version? We *invented* them, we conjured them out of the slime. And I said: Don't you think this might be *unhelpful* right now, explaining how we raised them from the level of apes and all that? And she said: You're a coward just like the rest, terrified of the truth.

"Still, this was just discussion. Theoretical. We assumed we'd work it out. Just give us a few months. She thought I'd agree to go, and I thought she'd agree to stay.

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"And meanwhile she was turning me into a poet. She said, you are a poet, because when you write about something I can see and feel it and my life is made larger. My poems encircled her, they were vines tangled around her, couldn't stand up without her; I wrote poems on her body. She wanted me to. I shouldn't be telling you this."

"You should."

He had been talking for a while. His voice was dry, and rougher all the time.

"She once said, give me poetry, not lingerie. She said it in French and it rhymed. Hear the rhythm? Dactyls? Said it in French and it rhymed? We used to capture rhythmic sentences on the wing and present them to each other like butterflies."

"You actually *wrote*—in—what? Ink? With a *pen*?"

"Not with a pen. There were no ballpoints then. Forget it. Various kinds of grease pencils, markers, laundry markers. We were nuts."

"Just tell me how you did it. Explain. Exactly."

"Would only make me sound depraved."

"Tell me!" twisting the words like a handkerchief.

She looked wrung out herself.

"Should I get you a drink?" He was already in the process of standing.

"Maybe soda? Thanks. Maybe—tonic water?"

He came back with two gin and tonics and she took one, sipped once, shivered. The shadows were getting longer. Gripping her glass tight and pressing it against her chin she fixed him with playful, commanding eyes. "Tell me about writing on her body. How, where, what, everything." So he did.

"I took her to Coney Island and wrote a poem about that. She reworked the draft. That turned into my first published piece."

"The one that starts, 'The paper sun slides past the edge of time—/the belly-dancing hands of cigarette smoke climb,/the coaster's resting, barkers in their caves;/the tapered gullcry arches to a point/(five feet of silence for the wash of waves)' . . . and then tells about Ada? *Poetry for Everyman—Young Americans of the 1930's?*"

He looked blank for a moment. "Wow. First-rate research."

"Go on. Please. I got it on the web."

"Naturally."

"No, I *hate* the web, *totally*, I hate, just, this whole entire. . . . Please don't think—" But her sudden clap of passion was dissipating like smoke after a gunshot. "I'm sorry. Go on."

"You hate this whole damned age you live in?"

Defiantly: "Maybe."

"So does everyone who's unhappy."

Suddenly in tears: "You can patronize me but. You'll be *wrong*."

Now he looked unhappy, but she shook her head and pulled the tears back hard and said, "Go on."

"Once I asked why she didn't write poetry herself." He was shaken and his voice was dark and drifting. "And she said: I don't have to, you're my disciple. I told her that was an odd way of putting it. She said, don't you write my sayings in that notebook? True, I sometimes did. She said, you dominate me physically, why shouldn't I dominate you intellectually?—just teasing. Bear-baiting. But there was always that certain recklessness. She said, the German plan is to kill off God and replace Him with Hitler. To kill God, she said, it's simple: forget about Nietzsche,

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just kill the Jews. You have to listen to them, they always say *the Jew*, never *the Jews*; the Jew is poison, the Jew must be eradicated. What's wrong, no plural in German? But which Jew do you think they're really talking about, which Jew do they hate so much? Which Jew do they hate *most*? You know. The Jew they worship! The Germans have always been crypto-pagans. You have to live there to understand. There's a reason the Reformation happened there: Christianity was always alien to Germany. Once a century, they try to shake it off.

"And more like that. And as for me, I just kept asking her to marry me. Each time I wanted it more. It *had* to be, we were intertwined tighter and tighter. Each time, same answer: if we settle in Europe. And each time, that prospect seemed more and not less insane.

"How *could* I agree? As the months passed, her plan got to seem not just stupid but suicidal. But she wanted it more and more. Still, we had time. Then it was September 1, 1939 and the war was on—Hitler invaded Poland and two days later Britain and France declared war—and the argument was unresolved, and time was up.

"I was about to start my junior year at Brooklyn College. I said, please marry me, we can't go to Europe now, but after the war—I promise. But the war made her *more* frantic to go. I'd say, what can you possibly accomplish in Europe *now*, and she'd say, 'Coward! Some man.' The war made her crazy. Crazier. And for me the problem wasn't just the craziness of going; I loved this country and my parents and Brighton Beach and the boardwalk and Steeplechase and Swan House and a lot of things.

"But most of all, her. So I stood at the window of my parents' living room; desperation. Leaning with both palms on the radio where several issues of *Lit. Quart.* with my poems inside were proudly propped. Looking out that window in the evening, you could feel the whole live city in the palm of your hand, up to Manhattan, over to Far Rockaway. The girls' jump-rope chants and the flat smack of the boys' pink rubber balls and bicycle bells and the grainy hum of roller-skates, and moms shouting out windows at their kids—and the odd wheeling screaming seagull, and pigeons and salt air—and my own face in the upper windowpane. A small room, overcrowded: gold picture frames, worn red oriental rug, skyblue Palestine box for the Jewish National Fund. Newspapers. Sheet music. My mothers' pins and thimbles rolling around in a ceramic ashtray. Lord I miss that place, my parents' place.

"An outsider would have thought I'd reached absolute maximum unhappiness when I was home with my Mom and Dad—I stormed and raged and kvetched. But that was only because, when I was with my parents, I was free. They understood. They were frantic that I shouldn't go to Europe, naturally. But they knew I didn't *want* to go; they saw the whole picture.

"I'd ask Ada, what do you gain by going back *now*, and either she'd curse me out or she'd say, one symbolic act can be more powerful than a million men. I'd say, why should anyone even *notice* you over there, for God's sake, and she'd say, once I'm there, I'll find a way to make them notice. Hitler wants to chase the Jews out of Europe; can I *let* him?

"And what could you answer? These were arguments on a different level from real life. Not only were Jews desperate to get out but, once the war started, no one would've given ten cents for Belgium's chances. For now, things were all quiet on the western front, but everyone's parents remembered 1914, when the first thing Germany did was smash up Belgium like a baseball bat smashing a dollhouse. My Dad used to call her 'your beautiful little fruitcake.' 'Your beautiful French

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meshugeneh.' I'd say, *Belgian*, Dad, and he'd say, I notice you don't argue with the other part."

"BUT AT last my father said: call her bluff. Late one night at the kitchen table, he was stubbled and exhausted, shirt unbuttoned, no collar. Thick sloping neck like a wrestler; clarinet under his arm. Cool heavy bottle of cherry soda on the table, slippery with condensed droplets of salty humidity. Yiddish newspapers, English newspapers. The narrow window propped open wide, gasping for air on a hot night; Mom asleep; my Dad and I often sat up late. He switched off the radio. Poland going under. I don't know what to tell you, he said, except: call her bluff. He meant—how can I explain—maybe she's bluffing, probably not; in any case, if you have to go to Europe, then go and that's all. Because part of my problem was, I needed *them* to say it was all right. And they didn't want to say it but they knew they had to; and finally they did.

"So next day I told Ada: fine, we'll go to Belgium *right now* and get married and settle there; finished, the end, done. And then she said, quit college after two years? *That's* what you want to do? She had a point, but what did she want from me? *What*?" Hoarsely indignant, as if Ada personally were listening in. "She said, at least finish the year, or at least the term. I said, fine, so let's *say* we're engaged and plan things, and she said, but *I* ought to leave right now; who can plan? There's a war on! And then I *really* felt like putting my fist through a window.

"I understood better all the time how little I knew her, or she knew herself. It's easy for me to say now: she was a certain type of genius, or nut, and a genius just *can't* be normal, but I sure as hell didn't see that then. I was a kid. . . . And I was scared. All I knew was, we were getting more unbalanced all the time. Maybe I loved her more than she loved me—or, as I liked to think, she loved me just as much, but Europe was grabbing her tighter and tighter around the throat.

"So we fought; she wouldn't even let me announce our engagement. But she didn't leave for Europe, either, though she kept saying she needed to, wanted to, had to. And meanwhile I loved her more all the time; my ego and writing and lust and love kept on expanding in one big whoosh, like that last big firework that closed the show the night I took her to Coney Island a few weeks later, a Saturday night—fall '39.

"We watched from the boardwalk. A big, easygoing crowd; on hot summer nights people used to sleep on that beach with their kids—can you imagine, today? The ocean's slow shuffle in the dark, and then the fireworks; long whistle, sky explodes. Dazzle lights the crowd. I pull her closer, clamp her in front with my chin on her head, my arms around her. Whistle and burst. Whistle, burst. Suddenly she asks: would you wade into the ocean to save me? Face twisted 'round, close to mine. Boardwalk neon mirrored in her urgent eyes. Would you follow me into the surf? Whistle. Burst. The ocean's long heaving sigh. The lightning dazzle. What could I say? *Of course!* She says: so do it. And I say: but *you won't let me!*

"The last one was a huge gasp of a ring that got huger, huger, huger and then just hung there enormous in mid-air . . . and I had to make love to her immediately. Couldn't wait. Whispered in her ear. She said, *d'accord*. I grabbed her hand and we're off. She's two arm-lengths behind me, the length of my arm and hers, running to keep up as I yank her through the crowd, down the short stairway to the street, off toward Brighton Third Street where Izzy lived, and I got Izzy outside in his bathrobe cursing, in the alley beside his parents' home, he never for-

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gave me—which Lord knows I don't blame him for: here I am with this gorgeous girl who belongs to me, standing there with her chin up showing her proud profile, panting defiant, and me *discreetly* intimating to this poor, hard-working shmuck with his deep brown serious eyes that I needed to screw her this instant, so if he would just please, kindly, hand over the keys—how could I have done it? *Gott in Himmel.* How could I, I mean—what kind of *jerk*. . . . Well."

He swept a hand helplessly over his hair. Silence, a whole agonized minute.

"Memories that make you want to stick a knife in your guts. But. In another way, you wouldn't trade them for anything on earth. I got the key off Izzy. Key to the dance studio off Neptune Avenue his father managed, where Izzy worked on weekends. Up to the second floor, to the back room. Ratty old sofa in brown-black tweedy stuff. Nothing ever moved me more than her narrow shoulders on that coarse brown cloth, her bare back. Lord, the human female's sheer narrowness in your arms is the most beautiful thing on earth.

"On the subway back to Grand Central she said, in French again—and now I was angry at myself, seething, I could picture Izzy, I could see already, this image is gonna haunt me for the rest of my life; you know, *afterward* you feel like a shmuck, never before—but all the same, I was thrilled with myself and the whole universe; she said, I have to get out of here. You're making me stay. I won't have it. I won't stay. And I said, I'm not making you, it's just that I love you, I want you, I want you *safe*, I want you here, and she said—you want, you want, you want. Who will do this thing if even I won't? And I said, for the millionth time, why *even* you? And she said, who if not me? And then startled me by saying in Hebrew, which I'd never heard her speak before but she'd been studying—famous words—'If I'm not for myself, who *will* be? If not now, *when*?'

"And let me tell you: there was no Jewish Hitler, and that's the tragedy. There were Jews of earth-shaking willpower who knew what Hitler was, but didn't choose to take him on, or didn't deign to. A Ben-Gurion, a Trotsky. Wittgenstein—ferocious man, war hero—couldn't be bothered with Hitler. A David Marcus, or the young Yigael Yadin; who knows. They all had the violent willpower and sheer craziness to confront Hitler—that's what it came down to, not an army, when Hitler started *he* had no army—but they didn't do it. Hitler was one man. What Jews lacked wasn't the will to fight, but they had no *fuehrer* of their own.

"And then there was my own *petite amie*, my girl, my little friend. On the train to Westchester she was still picking fights, but at last she leaned against me—discreetly; with her hand in my hand. She said, but after all, I love Swan House. I said, also me? And she said, also you. Why was I bugging her for reassurance when she had just given me more than most girls, in a whole *lifetime*. . . .?"

Gwyn said, so softly he barely heard: "How can you be great if you aren't even good?"

He frowned. "Easy."

"Well. Maybe I'm wrong."

He stared into the forest for a while before continuing.

"IT WAS three A.M. or something when I finally made it back to Brooklyn. I got off at Stillwell Avenue, the el station near Coney Island, and walked over to Sheepshead Bay, which had a wooden footbridge where there were always men fishing, day and night. Late-night salt-marsh stink. Blinking orange tips of cheap cigars. Did I mention I loved Brooklyn? And miss it? I hung over the rail, watching the bob and dip of scattered lights, and the black water.

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"And at the end of 1939, just a few months later, it all blew up." He stood, slowly: "I'll be back. Will you wait for me?"

She smiled.

He shrugged his crumpled sports jacket back into place and, smoothing his hair, prepared to set off for the house. She held the key out to him.

Her legs were crossed again and she smoothed her skirt again and the bottom fell out of his will again.

But he only said, "Keep it."

"May I? Thank you very much."

He leaned low and kissed her forehead.

He headed off toward the house—large and slow and straight, jingling coins in his pants pocket, nodding vaguely to the patients and nurses on the lower patio, traveling slowly down the steel track of his own thoughts. He could have passed for ten years younger. Fifteen. She watched him disappear into the building.

III

"Late November 1939: her father died suddenly. He had a stroke, and died the same night. Seven weeks later to the day, Owen Lawrence died. Also a stroke. Evidently. Your great, whatever he was, uncle; one of the best men I ever knew."

It was getting dark and the patio crowd was thinning. "Both, just like that? Had they been sick?"

He sighed and shrugged. "Another drink?"

"Maybe." He stood again, walked back into the building and returned with two glasses; sat down, said, "I ought to get you something to eat"; came back eventually with a box of graham crackers. They each took one.

She said, "You know what I think? The road to being great leads through being good."

"I doubt that."

They crunched their graham crackers. She said, "Go on."

"The day after her father died Ada announced, I'm going back to Europe now, I have to; I think my family will come with me. A small voice, barely there, through the grief. Like Paris on shortwave.

"I said—okay, I'm coming too.

"And she said no, not now, I have to take care of—everything. I said, so when are we getting married? She said, I can't think of that now. I said, but we'll live in Europe, settle there right now, anything you want—anything. And she said no, I can't think about that now.

"And it *was* monstrous to press her the day after her father died, the day of the funeral. It's just, I was frantic." Dense voice, slowly unrolling. "That's no excuse, it's an explanation. In the weeks afterward I'd hold her and she would cry for hours. It was all I could do not to cry myself. In some ways we'd never been closer; every night, the instant I closed my eyes I'd see her face. Do you know what it is, what it is to. . . ."

He stopped. She didn't know.

"I talked about her to anyone, just to say her name. But when I asked her again, she said no again." His words were getting softer, slower. "And then Mr. Lawrence died. And she and her family were all alone at Swan House with Ray Lawrence.

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"So. Another funeral. Again she put on her black hat, again with the veil. We stood side by side, first in church, all waxed wood inside like a coffin—I'd never been in a church before—and then at the cemetery. Ray Lawrence never said a word to us. Naturally we offered our condolences. But he looked away, ferociously. He knew something we didn't. I felt as if I'd fallen asleep in afternoon daylight and woken up confused in the dark. You know that feeling?"

She nodded.

"Her despair, my despair; and understand, as a bonus, our ties to Swan House cut forever. We assumed. Ada and her family were allowed to stay on temporarily—a servant let them know—on condition they were packing to leave. Of course that did *not* mean they had to leave the country—we could've found them a place, or they could've stayed with us, and they were here legally and no one would've bothered them anyway—but they were determined to go back to Europe, because Ada was determined.

"She and her mother and her two little sisters were packing. I was out of my mind. Ada was like a girl about to swan dive off a cliff: completely terrified; completely resolved.

"A cold day, early in February 1940—the first time since her father died that we made love. Afterward she told me it was no longer right because. I don't know. I don't know what she said. She wouldn't let me any more. That's what it came down to. She said, this is only for now, but. . . .

"Up there in the octagon we danced. Holding her, humming tunes into her hair—a gritty trickle beneath the lace fringe of ice and snow at the edge of winter, winter and spring separated by one long heavy sigh. She'd always looked me straight in the eye, but now she'd turn away. When I talked, she'd nod without hearing. Auto-pilot. Finally it was our last Sunday, the very last, they were leaving Tuesday. We met in the forest. Out there." Showing the direction with his chin. "I was persona non grata at Swan House. We snuck into the basement entrance. We climbed to the octagon. She said, go ahead, because I can't leave you like this. And I said," he took a deep breath, "*no*, because I would not be *suffered*, out of pity—"

He broke off.

"YEARS LATER I could have killed myself a dozen times over, thinking about that afternoon. But sometimes I also think, it was the first time in my life I ever knew restraint—not goodness, but a place where you have a view of goodness in the farthest distance. Restraint. A place I'd never been to before.

"But that night when I got home, I banged my head against the wall. You think it's only an expression, bang your head against the wall? It isn't. Head against plaster.

"The day came, and I pulled up at four on a Tuesday morning at silent, enemy-occupied Swan House—it was Ray's house now—in a big old borrowed '36 Reo sedan. I'd been summoned to drive them out to Long Island, where the Pan Am Clipper departed for Lisbon at eight.

"In April 1940 it was too dangerous to sail, anyway on French or British boats. In the moist spring dark I loaded the car. Four or five heavy valises; the rest had been sent on ahead. One of the few times in my life I couldn't talk, not at all. If I'd said even one syllable I'd have burst into tears, like a jerk. So I heaved and shlepped, upstairs and down.

"It's a heavy time of night. Magnifies sounds. Fixes them in your mind. Crunching pebbles of the driveway. Swish of skirts as they got in. Creaking springs as we sit. The car rocks slightly. Her mother in front beside me, Ada

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behind me and her sisters beside her, silently crying. I step on the starter and the engine scrapes around and rat-tats and I'm about to put it in gear and there's Ada's face next to mine. The warmth of her breath, perfume, raised veil—leaning all the way forward. Dearest, she says, whispering, in fact you were right, come with me. Marry me there. Come as soon as you can, join us. You were right. I *am* sorry.

"Well. I said yes. Burst into tears anyway. I kissed her mother. Then her. Go figure.

"We drove into the dawn. Pink line spreading outward both ways from the center. We were happy, sort of, but we'd all been crying, every one of us. What a production number.

"The minute we were alone I wanted to ask her why in God's name, *why*, did you have to wait till *now* to tell me? But of course we were never alone. So I asked her anyway, mildly, as we drove. And she said, as soon as you join us in Europe we'll have plenty of time to talk. Also I left you a note in the octagon, you can always go back there and sneak in. They'll never find it, no one even knows any more that the octagon exists, except Ollie—Ollie was the head janitor. Ray doesn't know, she said. The note explains everything, just in case somehow we can't rendezvous right away.

"We pulled up at a White Tower in the Bronx for donuts and coffee. Afterward I stood with Ada and her mother at the curb as we waited for the girls. The warm-red neon of an all-night Chinese restaurant blinking on, off, on; across the street, a parking lot full of city buses crouched on their rounded haunches, those bulbous fenders—with a far-off square of Manhattan skyline right above them. Peach sky, lavender towers. Fresh spring smell, and a dark humid depths-of-the-earth breeze from a subway grate nearby. A sheet of newspaper wandering casually down the empty sidewalk. Blink on, blink off. No one said anything and I thought, this is just so beautiful; more than Europe could ever be.

"Out to that huge, heavy silver Boeing airboat rocking in the sound. We'd never seen anything like it. Whistling breeze, slap of waves; smell of machine oil and the sea. I hugged her little sister Claire, and her little sister Laurence—strange coincidence of a name. And I hugged her mother; and Ada said, see you soon.

"We hugged. We kissed. We were engaged again. Or maybe I should say, we were engaged at last. What am I doing even *trying* to tell you this story?" Leaning way forward, looking at the ground.

"Go on."

"They were going to stop in Paris with her father's cousin until I joined them, then we'd all go on to Belgium together. She wired me when they got to Paris, 'Jusqu'ici rien n'a pu guérir mon coeur qui souffre toujours du mals du pays. Until very soon, your Ada.' From a poem by Gerard de Nerval. Until now, nothing could heal my heart, which still suffers from homesickness. Idiomatic 'toujours.' Okay. So."

"It wasn't so easy to arrange, and I had no money. I had to borrow. I got bumped from my first flight, had to wire her again: leave May 6, arrive Paris evening May 7. I thought of sneaking back into Swan House to pick up the note, but I had no interest in running into Ray—he'd probably have me arrested—and anyway I was going to see her soon. And I was busy getting everything set. And the fact is, I didn't *want* to see her note. I wanted to see her. You see what I mean. It's not so strange I didn't go back. I never even considered it, really.

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"Then it was me boarding the Clipper, and the thing went buzzing and churning forward and lifted off like a ship tearing itself out of the ocean, with the earth thrown back, shrinking into a corner of the window—it was a hell of a thing, taking off in a flying boat. The morning sun flooding the huge tall cabin. You could see the Trylon and Perisphere at the World's Fair back in Queens, blazing white.

"And the strange way it worked out, I was in Europe when I heard from my parents about Swan House. They told me about the plain envelope—no telegram, no special delivery, just a plain envelope and a plain legal letterhead informing me, roughly twenty-one weeks after Mr. Lawrence's funeral, that Swan House and all the associated properties had been left to me. I was instructed to show up and do some legal procedure or other, swear some sort of statement, but that was cut and dried.

"Ray got millions in cash and securities, but I got Swan House and I was stunned. I reread my parents' cable a thousand times."

The wind had backed off but they heard it speaking in the trees. The lower patio was empty.

"That was later. Meanwhile—from Lisbon you went by railroad to the edge of Spain, then you walked into France across the bridge at Hendaye. I was lightheaded from sleeplessness and excitement and lust. Just drifting. The Sud Express ran north to Paris. Then a cab through the Paris dusk to the address she'd given me. I'd never been out of the States before. I was nervous and exhausted and in awe of where I was. France was at war and you felt it, even though nothing much was going on at the front. Men in uniform everywhere. Strange feeling for an American. On top of which, I was in a state of absolute sexual delirium. I'd spent the whole trip daydreaming in minute detail about her body. Complete inventory.

"Through a gate into a courtyard, then up a dark winding staircase with my valise banging along at my side—and my heart banging. I was in such a hot frantic hurry, I remember cursing out loud when I stumbled over a chunk of plaster or something on a landing. Now she was minutes away, seconds away—specifically her face and her floating-fragrant hair, her shoulders and waist and the incurve of her back and her soft arms and all the rest, moments away, moments—and I knocked on the door. And the instant it opened, I knew. I saw it in the maid's face. Ada wasn't there. The maid took one look at me with my valise and my panting, desperate smile, and it all fell into place for her, smug spidery woman in a gray uniform, jubilant to be delivering such a huge surprise. Such a knockout punch.

"She had a note for me from Ada." For a moment he pursed his lips and drummed his fingers on the chair. 'My darling I'm sorry but I simply couldn't wait, *had* to go on, please come and find me here in Brussels where I await you, don't disappoint me, until soon, your Ada.' She gave an address." He opened his palm, fingers spread, talking to himself with his hands; posing questions.

"It had never occurred to me, not for one instant, that such a thing could happen. That she wouldn't be there. It was—my self-assurance completely gone. Like a drug that wore off all at once. Back down the dark staircase. Out onto the street. Suddenly my valise weighed a ton and I was too tired to think and I was no longer excited to be in Paris, I was terrified. At an hour when everyone else was rushing around in his own little French world, going home at the end of the day, you felt especially desolate.

"I walked a few blocks and came to a hotel and went in and got a room. I was so exhausted, my mind was dipping and spinning and doing loop-the-loops but I couldn't sleep. Next morning I managed to get myself to the wrong train station,

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there seemed to be roughly a million of them; didn't make it onto a train until mid-afternoon. It was overloaded. Felt like we were reeling and stumbling along. Unscheduled stops, pauses, halts in the middle of nowhere. It's only a couple of hours to Brussels ordinarily, but it took us more than twice that. Columns of French soldiers shuffling along the roads. When it got dark we slowed to a crawl, because all signal lights were dimmed in the wartime blackout."

"BELGIUM WAS not at war, but it felt jittery. In Brussels it took me a long time to get a cab. Then I set out for the address she'd given me. Boy, this time I suffered, waiting. Suffered. This time I understood the equation. Would she be there? The driver couldn't find the address; we kept driving up and down a street named Avenue Louise. Ancient gasping black box of a cab. But the driver was patient enough. He spoke slowly in his strange Walloon French which I could just barely, partly, understand."

"And what *happened*?"

The first words she had spoken for a while. Her voice felt like a warm buzz. They had nearly reached darkness together.

"It seemed like we'd been over the whole city twice by the time we finally arrived at a small crouching brick house, with a single light on—and the premonition had already hit me. Another maid. Another note. Kindlier maid, pretty, with a little boy clinging to her legs. 'We were so close to my home in Liège I simply *had* to go, please follow me here, it's so close, just an hour or two from Brussels'—and she gave the address. And she added what she called 'my only poem'—'aux Etats Unis I am beaded up, In Europe I soak like Dew into the ground.' And a postscript after that. 'Darling, speak loudly for the Jews.'

"It was too late to set out again. The maid said I could stay the night but I checked into another hotel nearby. Up the rickety spider-cage elevator—you know the elevators they used to have in Europe? Those open cages? Down a tall ominous hallway red-carpeted, smelling of mildew.

"For the whole next day—it was Thursday"—he had picked up another branch and flexed it double; its outward push sculpted his right hand—"I lay on the bed in my hotel room. On it, not in it; overcome. Temporarily paralyzed. Holding her note in my hand, looking out the tall, narrow window—and I did nothing. I was so furious I could barely think. At last" (a swift soft crackling as the branch broke) "I was truly angry at her, for everything. For months of torturing me until she said yes at the absolute last possible moment, and then, here I'd come all the way to Europe" (he flung it away sidearm, so hard he grunted; it sailed over the chain link fence into the woods) "in the middle of a war, and, what kind of game *was* this, she couldn't even sit still long enough for me to catch *up* with her? Once, okay, but twice? All sorts of dark suspicions. I wasn't even sure she was *in* Liège. I thought, connect these dots—Paris, Brussels, Liège—how do I know she isn't going straight to Germany? Next stop, the Reich.

"There are limits. You reach a certain point and all the wicked doubts you ever had come to the surface and the ghosts gather—dark, hard, twisting your stomach; that whole long day I lay there in a black rage."

"I was wondering," she said, in an extra effort to make herself speak in the smooth narcotic twilight, "as you were telling it: could there have been some other reason for this sudden decision to get married after all, right away? *Was* there, really?"

He looked at her wearily (only his eyes shifted). "It doesn't matter. I don't know.

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No. No there wasn't." (Clearing bark flakes off his jacket and pants with impatient glancing swipes.)

"Okay, and?"

"The problem with real life is, there are always too many explanations. Some you can bear, some not. Well, it was an awful day—the hotel fronted on a small plaza with trolley tracks, the tracks turned sharply in the plaza; two-car trams swinging stiffly around that curve. Evil clacking. Brussels has a sort of grotesque medieval darkness—steeply pitched roofs straight out of a nightmare, like one of those loony, bloodthirsty German folktales. And when I turned on the radio, all I heard was Nazis shouting; every station I could find was German. I knew Yiddish so I understood the substance. Denmark was newly occupied, there was fierce fighting in Norway—which the British and French seemed to be losing.

"It wasn't until late that night that I finally reached equilibrium; a man needs to be able to *read*. Those notes of hers finally sank in. The language she'd used became real at last. She was an expert tease, had no difficulty being ironic, or deliberately unclear, or provocative, but those notes"— his hands were clenching and unclenching didactically, his voice rough and hoarse and tired but patient. "You see what I mean? Absolutely straightforward. Meant just what they said. She simply couldn't wait to see the town she was born in. That's all. Nothing so complex about that. You see? And beyond that—"

"No, I don't see."

He looked up. "*What* don't you see?" She considered, then shook her head: "Please, go on."

"Very late, long after midnight, it finally all came clear to me, how it all fit together. She just wanted to go home and take up her work, start doing whatever she felt she had to do, her destiny; bending history, like—bending an iron bar. Hitler had nothing she didn't have. And he didn't, at least not at the start. It's true. She was charging ahead, plunging into Europe the way a knife plunges when some irresistible force is driving it in."

THE WIND seethed. The sun was setting, warmth withdrawing, shadows crept higher: flames of darkness.

"So I fell asleep satisfied at last, desperate to see her, and certain that I would, imminently—and of course the very next morning, May 10 at dawn, the Nazis hit like pit-vipers, and the invasion of Belgium was under way.

"The whole city was on fire with talk and sirens. Lord I hated myself, viciously. My memories of that morning couldn't possibly be right. I see myself holding a taxi driver by the shoulders, shaking him—I would never have done that; but I was searching frantically for a driver who would take me to Liège. When I found one at last and we set out finally down the Chaussée de Tervuren, we hadn't been on the road ten minutes before we hit a solid wall of chaos—stopped traffic—military, civilian, horses."

She crossed her legs again, swept her hair back with both hands and hugged herself in the cool, without taking her eyes off him.

"I got out and walked forward to the military roadblock; I could hear artillery in the distance and feel it, wasn't even sure what it was, at first—got to know it *real* well later—a steady low mumbling thud thud thud, first time I ever heard war; and a faint buzzsaw of distant aircraft, flashes of silver on the horizon far ahead, and I finally reached a small tough-looking redheaded sergeant who wouldn't let me through: no civilians. And I remember screaming at this man murderously at

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the top of my lungs, alternating French, English, and Yiddish, my girl is on the other side, I *must go get my girl*—and he said very calmly again and again, 'Impossible.' Admirable calm. So I pushed past him, broke into a run and two seconds later there were men all around me with rifles leveled—another first for me; they grabbed me by the arms and heaved me back over the line. Act of kindness. Probably could have had me shot or something."

He leaned over and grabbed another stick. Put his feet on the ground, straddling the chair.

"Somehow I wound up next day in the American consulate in Brussels—cavernous empty hallways, whole parade of smug-looking, patronizing men telling me to get the hell out of Brussels right now and go to London." Absently sliding the stick across the canvas cushion. "I tried four more times to get to Liège but some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war was going on around there and on May 13, Liège fell.

"The next five weeks, a pure delirium of remorse—no blood in my veins, no air in my lungs, just remorse, which is acid and burns. My parents were wild with anxiety, trying to get me to come home, and they alone kept me sane. Their presence at the other end of the telegraph. I leapt into action like a falling tower of blocks striking out in a dozen directions wildly as it collapses. I should have stayed put and let the invasion wash over me and then gone to Liège. But I went to London, like they kept telling me to. Get out of the war zone. We can't assume any responsibility, et cetera. Better chance to reach her from London. Center of the world. All this song and dance."

"My last night in Brussels I met Owen Harrison—my life is full of Owens—who used to work for the U.S. State Department in Brussels but got fired for being a drunkard, is how he put it, and went to work for the United Press syndicate; always sounded like a cover story. He promised me he would look for Ada and her mother and sisters, and if I kept the UP's Stockholm office informed of my whereabouts, he would let me know. I didn't take it seriously at the time but I figured, what the hell. I'd showed him a picture of Ada. He'd said, my God she's beautiful, something like that. It moves a man to see a beautiful girl in a snapshot; so she's real, she belongs to some normal, ordinary jerk like me. Moves a man. Brings it home."

"What photo was it?"

"The two of us."

"The *same one you showed me*?"

"I don't know. Don't know. So I went to London—and in London is where I heard from my parents about Swan House. A weird nightmare, wanting so badly to tell her, not being able to. If I could only have hired a hot-air balloon and just *shouted* it to all Europe: the octagon. The temple. No one but Ada could have grasped what it all meant: *ours*, a miracle. And obviously—I see it now, but I didn't then—he had meant this place as a gift for Ada at least as much as for me. Could even have meant it, I guess, as a final declaration of love."

Pained sigh: "A love-gift for another man to give," Gwyn said, "after you die, and never a single word to your beloved?" She shook her head raptly.

"I'm only guessing; I don't know his motives, really. . . .

"Anyway, as the days and then weeks passed, there were a dozen London offices I was in touch with every day, Belgian, American, British, Jewish, international—thousands of other desperate people crowding the same offices—and the military

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picture went from black to blacker and Paris fell, I was sure London was the wrong place and that I needed to go straight to Germany—as an American I could do it, in principle—and then cross back to Liège.

"So I went to Lisbon. There were Lufthansa flights from Lisbon direct to Berlin. But to get an entry visa for Germany you needed approvals from the foreign ministry *and* the police *and* the Gestapo; at one point I thought I'd made it and was actually on the plane when two Portuguese cops came aboard and very politely marched me off. With mustaches, looking like twins. Perfect parody of what Americans at that time thought of Europe, land of fancy stupid uniforms and comic-opera bureaucrats and pompous people. The breezy heat of that airfield, gasoline in the lemony Portuguese air. The ripping whine of spinning props. I'd been picturing the contemptuous way I'd speak to Nazis when I arrived. The German radioman smiled at me as I'd gotten on board, and I didn't smile back. Hero that I was. But they marched me off.

"You needed some kind of pull I didn't have. Or maybe no Jews got in, I don't know. Certainly damned few ever wanted to. Then someone told me you could get in from Switzerland—go to Switzerland first by train to Madrid," he held up one finger, "then another train to Barcelona," holding up two, "then a bus to Geneva across unoccupied southern France," three. "You had to pack food, there was none to be had en route—and France was stunned silent, turned to stone. But I did make it to Geneva, and then to Basel, hard up against Germany; slattering all over Europe like a BB in a frying pan—" Running his palm over the cushion between his knees.

"All Switzerland was tensed up tight, expecting a Nazi invasion any moment. Naturally she was neutral—just like Belgium and Holland and Denmark and Norway. But in that Basel hotel on a Tuesday morning, I looked north into the distance across the street, at a hazy blue-green slot between a brick technical high school and an office building; that slot was Germany! I was dizzy as usual from all-over exhaustion . . . but fairly calm at that particular moment.

"I thought I was getting closer. I could feel it. A warm, bright room with dust motes in a sun shaft, lustrous oranges in a soft-silvery nickel bowl; I was tipped back on the desk chair, watching the square Swiss flag, white cross on red, smacking the breeze outside my window; and Basel's own flag, curled bishop's crook, black on white, I'll never forget it. My thoughts at that moment were pornographic, I guess you could say, but gentle—of a time we were parting near the rear porch of Swan House," pointing out the direction, "and I had backed her into a corner out of sight and run my hand up her blouse in back and got her half undressed and she was pushing me away but laughing so hard she could hardly speak, and there were tears running down her face, which made it harder for her to fight me off—I was improvising some sort of funny story; actually I remember what it was. I was capable of virtually any outrage against her person, in broad daylight; she was utterly game. Nothing fazed her."

THE GATHERING night coarsened his face as if he were a scratched photographic plate disappearing into the past; hollowed his cheeks; made his white shirt-collar glow a faint pale blue against his darkening skin.

"A knock on the door and the boy with a telegram, which I was sure would be news at last of my visa to enter Germany. But in fact it came via Stockholm from Harrison who was still in Brussels. 'No proof positive,' it said, 'but exhaustive repeat exhaustive looking having produced no trace of any of the four since the

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morning they left Brussels afraid only one conceivable conclusion letter follows so terribly sorry Harrison.'

"I had to stay in Basel until I got the letter; I couldn't risk—"

He stopped.

"But the letter only said, they'd arrived in Liège so recently it was hard to trace them; someone thought they had disappeared on foot with a group of would-be refugees making for Brussels by way of Saint Trond, but the group never arrived in Saint Trond, and never returned to Liège, and fighting was heavy all over that region and the whole group was presumed dead.

"I went back to Lisbon. I couldn't stay in Europe: no money, no way to get any. Sailed on a Portuguese boat back to New York. Had to wait a while to get the boat. Remember sharing a room onboard with four other men. Ship was packed. Staring at my face in a mirror. Needless to say, I had changed."

Long silence, filled with wind. He rubbed his cheek with the flat of his hand.

"You did find out for sure, though, what happened to them?" Her voice was too eager and she toned it down. "Eventually?"

"No." Another silence. "Years later I made it to Brussels, shortly after the liberation, still in uniform, war still on—I'd just been promoted to major, believe it or not, no particular reason; and I found her name on a list with one sister, but not Claire or her mother. Reported deceased, 17 May 1940. Not conclusive. I found her mother's sister in Antwerp in 1946. A man had told her that, years ago, he had seen the four of them 'from a distance,' Ada and Mrs. Landau and her two little sisters, gunned down by German warplanes strafing refugees in an open field near Saint Trond. Mowed down in an open field. Target practice. But what is that, anyway? Third-hand hearsay. This man her aunt heard from was deported during the war, and also presumed dead. 'From a distance.' Meaning what? But I'd rather believe it than not. I'd far rather believe it.

"Ada's aunt: nearly blind. Widow. I sent her a check every month until she died, but she was the only relative I ever found. *The* only, on either side. The rest, all dead. Owen Harrison was a wonderful man. He was my friend for the whole rest of his life, and he stayed here at Swan House many times. He died in 1981, same week I filed for bankruptcy. His daughter still writes me. I paid for her college—decades ago, but she still writes. Wonderful girl.

"So. 'From a distance.' That's all. But Europe is not Mongolia. Everyone is accounted for. There was uncertainty to begin with. For a while, the line is slack. Then it tightens up gradually, and one day you wake up and the slack is gone, and the story is over; you don't even know just when it ended. You picture rescues, reunions; then you stop picturing them. But you still dream about them, now and then. Wish I didn't."

"And the note, back at the house," aghast sympathy overlaying her eagerness like a cool cloth, "in the octagon"—respectfully hesitant. "What did it say?"

He looked down.

"It must have explained," she was nodding her head slightly, unconsciously urging him on, "how, I mean—because it seems like she foresaw exactly, somehow *anticipated*—"

But he was silent, and stubbornly kept on being silent.

She said nothing; only looked at him, puzzled.

At last he said, "You avoid something because you lack courage to do it. But eventually" (the wind came licking up around the big trees past the fence) "the not-doing takes on a life of its own. And past some point. . . ."

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Wind.

"I don't see what you're saying." For the first time her voice sounded impersonal, official. Even cold.

Silence.

"I mean," she said, "it's not as if—you never read the note."

They were alone in the clear violet dusk.

"I mean, that would be just," she said, "just impossible. Wouldn't it?" Her voice retreating into confusion. Then she took a deep breath and smiled, as if she could draw forth a reassuring smile in return.

"THE DAY after I landed back home in Hoboken, I came out here, and it was empty except for three servants, Ollie and his wife and her old mother, who didn't know where to go." A trace of bitterness from the large man with the lined face and the comfortable, comforting voice and deep handsome eyes, fading into the dark. "I had the manuscript of my book with me, *Swan House*, which was also a book about her—my intention was to destroy it here." He cleared his throat like an old man. "I went up to the octagon and found the note waiting on the sofa, just as she had said. In an envelope that said on front" (again clearing his throat, as if he were aging in a rush while she listened in) "'for Saul only Saul.'

"But I couldn't open it. Impossible. I dropped the manuscript in a heap, and put the unopened envelope back on the sofa where she had left it. And I slipped over a line at some point, who knows when? '58? '65? Past that point, I knew: I never would go back up there."

Feeling returning to her numbed voice like blood to her face. "It's still *up* there? You just *left* it there?" Like a child at the teary edge.

"Aside from the war years, I spent my whole life here."

"So this whole *place*," she said, "is just one huge, unopened. . . ?"

"Shrine. With her words sealed inside. It's a perfect piece of art, a shrine with a perfect blank inside, unreadable, sealed forever; but sublime because it's her. All I can do" (again clearing his throat, his voice thinner and weaker and more transparent with every word) "is, guard it."

"But you've done that, that job is *finished*."

Wind on the empty patio. She half-rose, took one step and crawled onto the lower slope of his deckchair. She tipped herself sideways, folded both legs beneath her and tugged her skirt down to cover her ankles, gathering herself into a tight small space. "Climb aboard my magic carpet," he told her, wearily relieved. "Someone once said that to Rita Hayworth, in an old movie."

"But what does it *say*? Don't you *have* to know?" Gently, confidingly, in almost no voice.

"Why do Jews exist? That's what I have to know. That's what I've got to find out. For Ada's sake."

They sat side by side across the empty patio from Swan House, with its lit-up cascade of stained-glass diamonds—deep blue and violet, crimson and foam green and gold.

She rubbed each bare arm briskly with the opposite hand. He took off his jacket and draped it around her. She said thank you, and drew the lapels together with a satisfied shiver.

He put his arm around her, cupping his palm around his own jacket sleeve, drawing her close. She said thank you again. She leaned against him. He drew her closer. He was stiff and upright as a carved caryatid with a marble universe on its head. Looking straight ahead of him, at lit-up Swan House.

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Suddenly: "Take me up there with you." She pulled away to face him as he sat back again in the chair, rearranged his legs. Laying her words down carefully—but so excited she had to swallow to keep afloat. "Don't you see you could transform *everything*? Take me. We'll go up there, and open it *together*, and then we'll—"

"Gwyn darling, I could barely even *walk up* those stairs."

"You could!"

"But that's not the point. I've given my life to" (she waited him out, eyes clamoring) "what I've given it to."

"Waiting? But you don't *have* to!"

"No: guarding. Gwyn, sweetheart, not everything can be explained; not everything can be put into words."

"Yes, yes, I understand!" She twisted to face him and grabbed the arms of his chair so hard to boost herself up, she winced as her ring dug into her squeezed-together fingers. Then she spoke straight into his face: "Look, I understand what's in the letter, or might be—"

"You don't."

"The worst thing in the world."

"Don't. Stop."

"You admit I know?"

"How could you?"

"Then here it is." He started to speak but she talked right over him. "It says she was pregnant, *that's* why she had to get married, and she didn't want to face you so she thought, what the hell, I'll give this a try, but marriage meant nothing to her and *you* meant nothing to her, because she was this . . . genius of history. And you've been apologizing your whole life to this girl who wasn't fit to"—she stopped, breathless—"she *never* loved you, and not only that but there's an even worse thing about that letter, an *implication*, a conclusion, that you can't possibly—"

"Leave it!" Grim growl.

"Because, when she marched out into that Belgian field she not only—"

"*Enough!*"

He screamed it right into her face.

And then added, quietly, "I'm sorry."

She unpropped herself and wilted onto his chest. Minutes later she spoke again, with the side of her head pressed to his front, looking away: "It's just, you're so good, and she was nothing." He noticed he could feel her words with his lips—because (he noticed) they were resting on top of her head. And then a conversation in tones so mumurously soft (a pastel wash, almost transparent) that it seemed to be happening inside their minds.

"I believe I've forgiven her. I didn't know it before, but I do now. Dropping her letter without opening it, that was the act of forgiveness. You see?"

"Maybe."

"I lived my life as a buoy marking the spot where a great soul was lost—or maybe as a gravestone, maybe as a monument to an idea. The idea that man is great, and the Jews are great. And God is great."

THEY WERE quiet for a while. She toyed with his lapels.

"But if no one can read the words on the monument, what's the use?"

"*You* can read them."

"What about *your* life?" Her words emphatic, her voice still soft.

"All right, then, I'm the place where flower meets sunlight, and even God notices

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and says thank you. 'I am the eye with which the universe beholds itself and knows itself divine.' Y'know where that's from?"

She shook her head.

"Thank God you made me think of this again," he said. "It's Shelley's 'Hymn of Apollo.'"

"If you really can't take me up there. . . ."

He kissed the top of her head. "I can't."

"Then let me stay right here forever?"

After a moment's pondering he said, gently, "Why do you want to knock down and smash up my life?"

"To make room for a better one."

"I'm seventy-eight."

"*I'm* not."

"It's not right. It's impossible."

Holding her head between his hands he moved her gently back, pointed her face at his and kissed her decisively. "And that's goodbye," he said, "and good luck and God bless you. It's impossible."

But a moment later they were kissing vigorously and when she spoke again her words came out in a gasp.

"Evidently," she pulled another deep breath, "it is *not*."

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Now that we are gearing up for another presidential campaign, we should clear the air of one common misconception, namely, that the so-called median voter theorem tells the whole story by saying that candidates from the left and the right will gravitate toward the middle. This prediction rests on two basic propositions. The first is that voter sentiments, to the extent that they can be aligned on a single axis, take a bell-shaped form, with most voters concentrated in the middle. The second is that all voters, no matter where they are located in this one-dimensional space, will gravitate toward the candidate whose views are closest to their own. Given these two assumptions, each candidate in a two-person general election has an incentive to move from the middle of the distribution of his own party to the middle of the distribution of the electorate. In principle, that movement should continue until the two candidates just about touch each other.

The reason candidates migrate to the center is captured in the expression, where else can they go? Thus the voters on the right and left of the spectrum will dutifully stay with their candidate even as he marches toward the center. No matter how far the candidate strays, the unhappy voters at the edges will still vote their interest.

There is of course an undoubted kernel of truth in this analysis, for it helps explain some of the dizzying contradictions in electoral politics as candidates artlessly recalibrate their positions from the primary to the general election. But it is equally evident that this brief account does not tell the whole story, even if we grant the truth of its assumptions. Move as they may, the candidates on both sides still retain distinctive personas throughout the campaign. **What forces prevent perfect compression toward the median voter?**

The conceptual mistake in the standard analysis assumes that each voter has only a dichotomous choice between two candidates, so that the *intensity* of preference, as measured by the political distance between the preferred candidate and the voter, simply does not matter. That might be true in a world in which citizens only vote. But potential voters also supply financial support, free labor, and vocal support for their candidates. These critical elements significantly depend on the level of affection that any candidate for electoral office retains with her or his original base. If the disillusioned in the ranks even bother to vote for their candidate of choice, they may sit on their hands when it comes to funding, work, and advocacy. That lack of commitment could reduce resources and easily spell the difference between victory and defeat in a close election.

Obviously more is at work. Even so, just this one complication of the median voter theorem helps explains why politicians of all persuasions work desperately to be all things to all people. It is much easier to write about election campaigns than to run them.

—Richard A. Epstein

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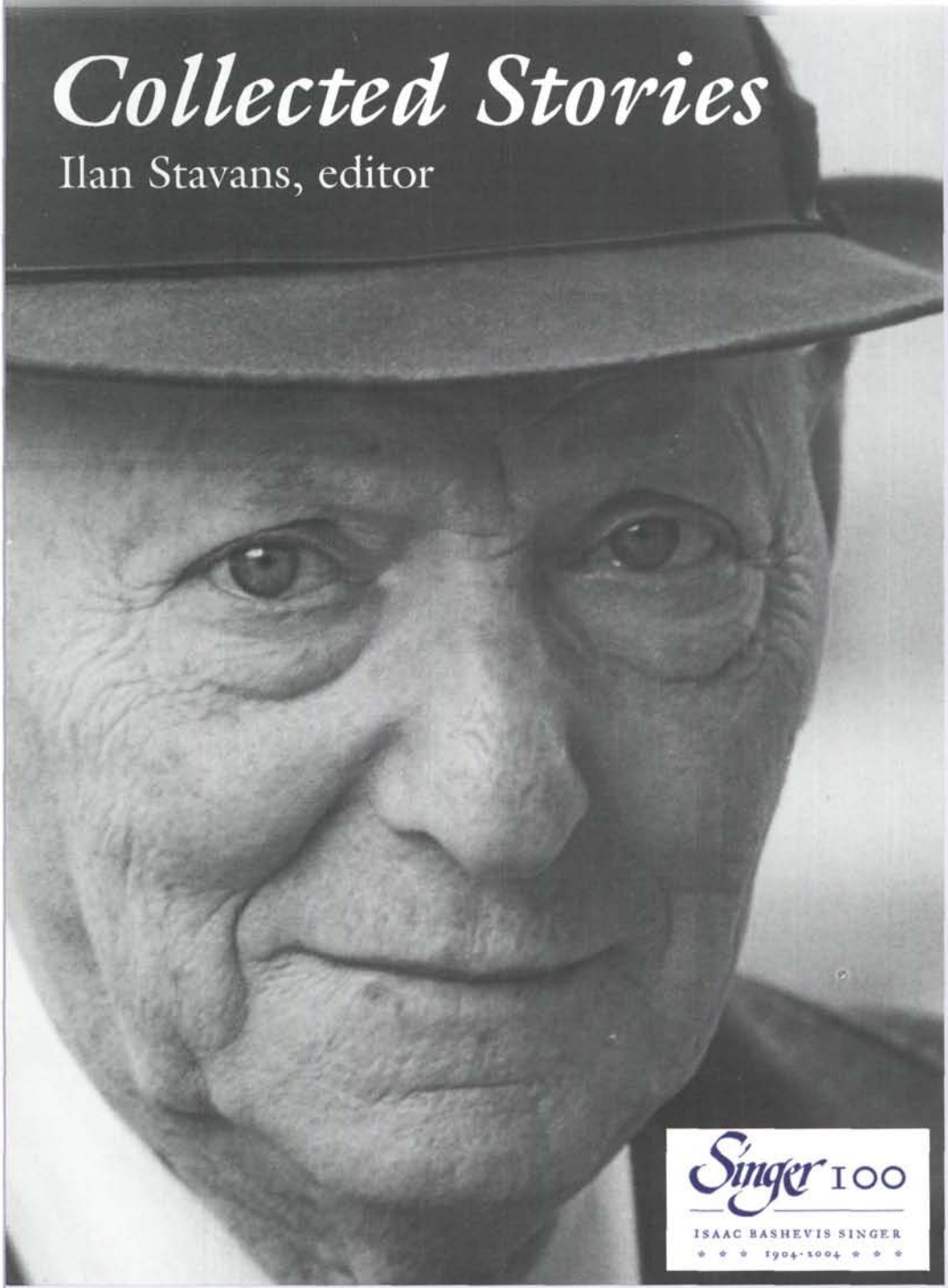

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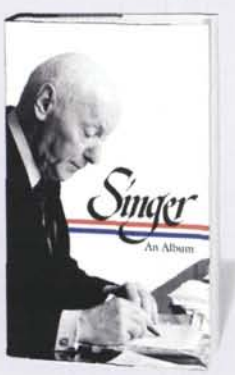

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